

**European University Institute  
Department of Political and Social Sciences**

**ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS 1945-1956.  
A COMPARISON OF NEOREALIST AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL  
APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Bertjan Verbeek**

**Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to obtaining the  
Degree of Doctor of the European University Institute  
of Florence**

**March, 1992**

**Committee:**

**Prof. Jean Blondel, European University Institute (co-supervisor)  
Prof. Michael W. Doyle, Princeton University  
Prof. Hans Keman, Vrije Universiteit  
Prof. Steve Smith, University of East Anglia  
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The origins of this manuscript can be traced to my last year of study at Erasmus University, Rotterdam, when I took an oral exam in Theory of International Relations, which was almost entirely dedicated to the first chapter of Kenneth Waltz's Theory of International Politics. It should therefore come as no surprise that I first intended to write a treatise on matters of philosophy of science related to the field of international relations. I was not easily persuaded by faculty members of the European University Institute and the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies to concentrate on the theoretical strength and weaknesses of neorealism and to supplement that survey with a piece of empirical research. My original reluctance to accept their wisdom may explain why several elements of the first plan may occasionally surface in this study. If I succeeded in giving up that reluctance and in presenting a comparative analysis of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956 from neorealist and cognitive psychological perspectives, this would not have been possible without the help of several individuals and institutions.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Individual actors in the study of international relations

In theories of world politics the place of individuals, most notably politicians, but also generals and diplomats, has so far remained rather underdeveloped. Traditionally, students of international relations have been anxious not to imitate the tendency of some historical studies to explain international politics by concentrating their attention on the behaviour of "great men" in history: e.g., kings, generals and popes. On the contrary, efforts have been made to attempt to discover underlying patterns of behaviour which were to be explained by the national interest of states, their capabilities, and by their geographical position. From this the view has emerged that the role of individuals ought at best give us some spicy details of the processes under study, but that it would hardly add to the understanding of international relations which was already given by an approach that did not take individuals into account. Of course, it has always been legitimate to study national politicians and their foreign policies in their own right, but it has usually been claimed that such an analysis would not substantially improve our understanding of world politics.

Part of this tendency may be explained by the eagerness of students of international relations to give their field an identity of its own. One regularly hears the argument that international politics cannot be a discipline with an object of its own, only a field of subjects that should be approached by use of theories that were developed in other disciplines. In order to retort to these remarks students of international relations tried to picture world politics as a realm of its own, with its proper logic. The projection of an international society that is essentially different from domestic society because of its anarchical character, allows one to think of international relations as having a different nature than, say, international history. This leads to the interpretation of world politics as an empirical discipline which studies nation-states that act under the cogency of the so-called security dilemma. This resembles a situation in which states defend their national interest of survival, because they basically cannot trust one another in a world that lacks an overriding international authority<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, the emphasis on such variables as the nation-state and the international political system implies a shift of attention away from individuals in two respects. First, allowing nation-states to rationally pursue a certain interest, exempts international politics from the moral responsibility of individual politicians, and soldiers, for that matter, for the courses

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Martin Wight, Power Politics, second edition edited by Hedley Bull and Carsten Holbraad, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1986 (1st edition, 1978), pp. 100-104.

of action their countries decide to adopt. As long as an empirical analysis of international relations speaks of world politics as a realm of necessity and duress, it discharges individuals of their moral responsibility<sup>2</sup>.

Second, and more important for this study, individuals are neglected as fruitful variables for explaining world politics. An emphasis on relatively few variables, such as the characteristics of nation-states and of the international political system opens up the possibility of complying with a highly valued objective within a certain conception of scientific research, namely parsimony: much variance in international behaviour could be dealt with by a handful of factors only. Moreover, it allowed for the use of rather easily accessible data, such as newspapers and statistical reports. This view is, of course, understandable, but may be partial. After all, the studies which have been undertaken do not explain the whole of reality. Moreover, ostensibly at least, individuals do play a part. This being the case, we must try to qualify our claims.

It is often claimed that international relations as a field has much to gain from contributions by other academic disciplines<sup>3</sup>. As a matter of fact, increasing attention has been paid over the last 15 years to the role of individual variables in international relations<sup>4</sup>. Very few of these works, however, put the difficult question whether individual characteristics are a crucial condition for the understanding of world politics. They prefer to elaborate on themes of what principal individuals on the international scenery look like, and of what they do. They thus fail to establish a link between the main body of literature on international relations.

Oddly enough, this upswing in attention for individual politicians is paralleled by an upsurge in writings that seem to put forward once more the case for international relations as a realm of its own. Over the last 10 years structural realism, or neorealism, has become a popular term to label that tendency in writings on international relations theory that tries to

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<sup>2</sup> See Michael Walzer, Just and Unjust Wars, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977, pp. 3-4; Charles R. Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1979, pp. 27-34; Marshall Cohen, 'Moral Scepticism and International Relations', in Charles R. Beitz, Marshall Cohen, Thomas Scanlon, and A. John Simmons (eds.), International Ethics, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1985, p. 11. Stephen Krasner formulated a similar kind of criticism of the bureaucratic politics model of foreign policy making in 'Are Bureaucracies Important ? (Or Allison Wonderland)', Foreign Policy, (7), 1972, pp. 162-163.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. James E. Dougherty and Robert Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations. A Comprehensive Survey, Harper and Row, New York, second edition, 1981, p. XVI.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. L.S. Falkowski (ed.), Psychological Models in International Politics, Westview, Boulder, 1979; Gerald Hopple (ed.), Biopolitics. Political Psychology and International Politics, Frances Pinter, London, 1982; Christen Jönsson (ed.), Cognitive Dynamics and International Politics, Frances Pinter, London, 1982.

pick up the traditional realist conception of the world as consisting of nation-states pursuing their national interest as they are captured by a security dilemma that forces them to strive for survival in an anarchical society. More than that, it attempts to supply this view of the world with a scientific rigour that the discipline allegedly previously lacked. Neorealism<sup>5</sup> should therefore not be opposed to traditional realist thinking, as it does not challenge the picture of the world that realist had provided, and has guided research in international relations over the last 40 years<sup>6</sup>. Neorealism should be seen as a reinforcement, and extension, of realism's scientific foundations<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, neorealism implicitly ignores the possibility of the relevance of variables other than structural ones.

The state of the art, therefore, resembles a kind of schizophrenic situation: on the one hand, we find a prestigious and popular approach, neorealism, that does not attribute a significant role to individual; on the other hand, a growing volume of literature on individual policy makers that nevertheless neglects the possibility to connect individual variables with processes of world politics, stressing individuals and their characteristics instead, but nothing more. In this context one of the purposes of this study is to try and advance the matter of the relative role of the individual. Two types of arguments have been put forward to show that the role of individual variables in the study of international relations does not constitute a problem at all. The first type refers to notions from the philosophy of science; the second to the existence of different levels of analysis.

(1) Philosophy of science. One could acknowledge that neorealism and an approach that puts emphasis on individuals resemble two different points of view within the philosophy of sciences. In fact it has been stated that neorealism seems to lend itself readily to a positivist format of empirical laws<sup>8</sup>, whereas, for instance, the cognitive psychology approach to

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<sup>5</sup> Neorealism is an unfortunate term. Actually, the Munich school of international relations, which emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of the field and stresses the role of individual variables, called itself neorealist long before the term found its opposite meaning in the Anglo-Saxon world. Cf. Gottfried Karl Kindermann (ed.), Grundelemente der Weltpolitik. Eine Einführung, Piper, München, 1986 (1st edition 1977), esp. pp. 42-43.

<sup>6</sup> John A. Vasquez, The Power of Power Politics. A Critique, Frances Pinter, London, 1983, passim.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Vasquez, Power Politics, p. 23, suggests the same appreciation of the behavioural revolution in the field of international relations.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Robert O. Keohane, 'Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond', in Ada W. Finifter (ed.), Political Science: The State of the Discipline, The American Political Science Association, (continued...)

individuals in world politics gets very close to an interpretative concept of science. The cognitive psychology approach claims that behaviour can be understood by the way individuals interpret their surroundings, and how they, by interpreting, help to constitute, that is, sustain and change, those surroundings<sup>9</sup>. Not so much 'objective' data on nation-states form the basis of an explanation of world politics, but rather the individual's subjective interpretation of such 'facts', and the way they decide to deal with them. In this view both approaches are irreconcilable. It would be tempting to give in here, and to let each scholar follow his or her preferred approach. This would be not only just wrong, but scientifically unsound as well. For one thing, neorealism itself aims at giving traditional realist notions a more rigorous foundation. This implies that it is legitimate to ask whether the neorealist approach succeeds in that objective. This study suggests that neorealist rigour leads to the neglect of variables, such as the perceptions and expectations of political elites, that are nevertheless necessary to give a satisfactory analysis of those events neorealism claimed it could understand without having to refer to these variables. In this context, a study of neorealism ask three questions: (1) whether the neorealist approach manages to explain political events sufficiently; (2) whether it manages to guide empirical research in an adequate way; and (3) whether research along the lines of the cognitive psychological approach produces better explanations of the same political events<sup>10</sup>.

Mansbach and Vasquez have argued that the traditional realist paradigm is severely defective in explaining political reality. For them a new paradigm that explains world politics better than realism is still lacking, but should be developed because realism could not explain America's participation in the Vietnam War, nor the rise of transnational actors, nor the erosion of the Cold War, nor the 1973 Arab oil embargo of some Western states<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, Vasquez demonstrated, employing data-based techniques, that 'of 7,678 hypotheses

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<sup>9</sup>(...continued)

Washington, 1983, p. 510; James N. Rosenau, 'A Pre-Theory Revisited: World Politics in an Era of Cascading Interdependence', International Studies Quarterly, (28), 1984, p. 252.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Roger Tooze, 'Economic Belief Systems and Understanding International Relations', in Richard Little and Steve Smith (eds.), Belief Systems and International Relations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, pp. 132-133.

<sup>10</sup> The three criteria were formulated by Imre Lakatos in 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1970, p. 116, quoted in Richard W. Mansbach and John A. Vasquez, In Search of Theory. A New Paradigm for Global Politics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Mansbach and Vasquez, In Search of Theory, pp. 6-13.

that were statistically tested between 1956 and 1970, those that accepted [] realist assumptions were more frequently falsified', and that 'of the statistical findings that did exhibit high correlations, the realist ones tended to contain more trivial findings than the nonrealist ones'<sup>12</sup>.

What should be ascertained, therefore, in this study is, first, to what extent neorealism has succeeded in saving traditional realism from such criticism by turning international relations enquiry into a more rigorous scientific endeavour; second, to what extent the emphasis on individual variables coming from cognitive psychology produces additional understanding of political events to neorealism (and realism, for that matter). It is not within the scope of this research to produce an alternative paradigm altogether.

(2) Level of analysis. It thus seems of no avail to explain away the problem of the individual in theories of international relations by simply classifying it as belonging to a different paradigm. However, another way of shelving the problem can be found in directing the individual to belong to a different level of analysis. In an influential article J. David Singer distinguished between three possible levels of analysis at which research in international relations could be conducted: the individual, the 'nation-state-as-actor', and the systemic level<sup>13</sup>. As a matter of fact, the nation-state and the international system have become the most popular levels of analysis in the practice of international relations enquiry, and, indeed, are now often taken for granted<sup>14</sup>. This can partly be understood in terms of the epistemological debate touched upon above: Singer identified analyses at the individual level with a phenomenological approach to world politics. He therefore disposed of this level of analysis, as it would disregard outside factors which may 'objectively' influence the situation under study<sup>15</sup>. Phenomenology apart, one could as well do away with the individual level, because it requires too many vague data which are hard to capture in an accurate, systematic, fashion, while the other two levels of analysis rely on data that are more easily accessible: the

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<sup>12</sup> John A. Vasquez, 'Colouring It Morgenthau: New Evidence for an Old Thesis', British Journal of International Studies, (5), October 1979, table 9, discussed in Mansbach and Vasquez, In Search of Theory, pp. 13-14.

<sup>13</sup> J. David Singer, 'The Level-of-Analysis Problem', World Politics, October 1961.

<sup>14</sup> Robert A. Isaak, 'The Individual in International Politics: Solving the Level-of-Analysis Problem', Polity, (7), 2, 1974, p. 266; cf. Steve Smith, 'Theories of Foreign Policy: An Overview', Review of International Studies, (12), 1986, pp. 13-19.

<sup>15</sup> Isaak, 'The Individual in International Politics', pp. 268-269.

national and systemic levels of analysis are thus the most comprehensive, despite the inevitable loss of detail<sup>16</sup>. Philip Tetlock argues that the level of analysis problem cannot be solved by a theoretical debate. Only the formation of one's empirical interest can shed some light on the relative importance of the various levels of analysis. He maintains that the relative importance of any given level of analysis depends on how specific and detailed an explanation of events we seek<sup>17</sup>. This brings us, however, dangerously close to a position in which one is indifferent to their relative weight; one would be allowed to state that three different analyses at three different levels tell three different stories. One would then consider this not to be a problem as one would be interested in a certain event only, so that reliance on one specific level of analysis would suffice. This is the position of Kenneth Waltz who claims that his use of variables, like the structure of the international political system, allows him to formulate an elegant theory of international relations, that is, at the system's level, which, according to him, should be distinguished from a theory of foreign policy, which operates on a different level altogether<sup>18</sup>. In this way, a recourse to three different levels of analysis as an analytical device, has resulted in the existence of different bodies of literature, that concentrate their efforts on one level of analysis only.

Political scientists have tried to find a way of interrelating the various levels of analysis in the concept of linkage. Linkages between levels were indicated by lines of influence or reciprocity, or by institutions which had developed, such as international organizations and other transnational actors<sup>19</sup>. This approach coincided with a shift of attention away from the traditional 'high politics' of power and security to what were called 'issue areas' in which states were but one actor in a limited, though 'multi-levelled', complicated whole<sup>20</sup>. The idea that powerful states held leading positions in all issues in world politics thanks to their military and economic might was replaced with the recognition that different issues areas may have different power structures and that leaders in one issue area need not be leaders in a different

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<sup>16</sup> Isaak, 'The Individual and International Politics', p. 267.

<sup>17</sup> Philip E. Tetlock, 'Psychological Research on Foreign Policy. A Methodological Overview', in Ladd Wheeler and Philip Straver (eds.), Review of Personality and Social Psychology, Volume 4, SAGE, Beverley Hills, London, New York, New Delhi, 1983, p. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, Theories of International Politics, Addison Wesley, Reading MA, 1979.

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. James N. Rosenau, Linkage Politics, The Free Press, New York., 1969; Jonathan Wilkenfeld (ed.), Conflict Behavior and Linkage Politics, McKay, New Ork, 1973.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Gavin Boyd and Charles Pentland (eds.), Issues in Global Politics, The Free Press, New York, London, 1981.

one. It is thus that Keohane and Nye described the real world to fall somewhere between the two idealtypes of 'realism', which for them implied a hierarchy of issues when security had taken precedence, and of 'complex interdependence', where multiple issue areas have multiple power structures, and here security issues do not dominate the scene<sup>21</sup>.

But, as a whole, the linkage approach ignored the individual level, and concentrated on nation-states and the international system instead, while adding a new category of transnational actors as an extra layer that deserved attention. This is recognized by Keohane and Nye themselves, as they looked back on the little progress that has been made by issue-linkage studies since 1977. They conclude that the original model with its explicit emphasis on transnational and intra-governmental struggles had been replaced by models that employ nation-states as actors<sup>22</sup>.

Even though one has tried to develop typologies of issue areas<sup>23</sup>, actual research within the linkage approach has produced rather poor results. Mansbach and Vasquez argue that this is due to the fact that, while the linkage approach challenged traditional realism's emphasis on power and security, it continued to sustain another assumption of realism, that is, the division between international and domestic politics. They claim that one should not a priori start with a set of levels of analysis, but with a new conception of issues that will make it possible to detect all potential actors involved at all possible levels of analysis<sup>24</sup>. Mansbach and Vasquez try to incorporate this new conception of issues into a different paradigm for international relations in which attention can be paid to the role of individuals as well<sup>25</sup>.

This is not the place to discuss their alternative to realism in full length. Here it is important to note that recent alternatives to realism, like linkage and issue-linkage theory, tend to continue to emphasize traditional levels of analysis in international relations, the nation-state

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<sup>21</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence. World Politics in Transition, Little, Brown, Boston, 1977, pp. 23-37.

<sup>22</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, '"Power and Interdependence" Revisited', International Organization, (41), 4, 1987, pp. 735-736. The negligence of intra-governmental processes by linkage theory and its consequences for the analysis of Italian foreign policy is discussed by Carlo Maria Santoro, L'Italia e Il Mediterraneo. Questioni di Politica Estera, Franco Angeli, Milano, 1988, pp. 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. James N. Rosenau, 'Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy', in James N. Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, The Free Press, New York, 1971, pp. 143 ff.; or William Zimmerman, 'Issue Area and Foreign Policy Process: A Research Note in Search of a General Theory', American Political Science Review, (67), 2, 1973, pp. 1204-1212.

<sup>24</sup> Mansbach and Vasquez, In Search of Theory, pp. 69-70.

<sup>25</sup> Mansbach and Vasquez, op.cit., pp. 273-280.

and the international system. The type of reasoning that they employ hampers an approach that aims at establishing the relative importance of the individual level of analysis. It goes without saying that somewhere individuals are involved, as, in the end, it is individual behaviour that will be observed. What would be an acceptable road to ascertain its contribution to the explanation of global politics? The fundamental problem is how to make clear the role of individuals in relation to other explanatory variables. It is obvious that individuals behave in a context<sup>26</sup>, and that thus variables at levels other than the individual can provide important insights. It is, however, too easy, even though, as a matter of fact, it is done only too often, to just describe certain contexts and then assume that one has made clear the relative importance of such variables.

### 1.2 How to take account of individual actors in world politics

What would be a correct way to establish the relative weight of individual variables? One possibility would be to set up an ambitious research project that involves both statistical analyses of collected data and the extensive scrutinizing of several case studies with the help of one methodological approach. One such example is Michael Brecher's International Crisis Behavior Project<sup>27</sup>.

It is my contention that, if one starts with a well-argued case-study, one should be able to investigate all problems involved in applying different approaches at different levels of analysis, and to appreciate the extent to which each contributed to the understanding of international relations. In this context Graham Allison's study of the 1962 Cuba missile crisis<sup>28</sup> is still the main example of how a case-study can tell us under which conditions certain kinds of explanation hold better than others, despite criticism of Allison's use of three 'conceptual lenses'<sup>29</sup>, and despite the accumulating evidence that his empirical claims may

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Jean Blondel, Political Leadership. Towards a General Analysis, SAGE, London etc., 1987, pp. 17-18; the discussion about how to establish the relative weight of political leaders resembles closely the debate on the place of the individual in international politics.

<sup>27</sup> Michael Brecher, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Sheila Moser, Crises in the Twentieth Century. Volume I: Handbook of International Crises. Volume II: Handbook of Foreign Policy Crises, Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision. Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, Little, Brown, Boston, 1971.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest J. Yannella, "Reconstructed Logic" and "Logic-in-use" in Decisionmaking Analysis: Graham Allison', Polity, (8), 1, 1975, pp. 156-172.



not all be correct<sup>30</sup>. I still believe that Allison is correct in claiming that different conceptual models may highlight 'features that might otherwise be overlooked' and may make 'persuasive the importance of certain factors that might not otherwise be so'<sup>31</sup>. I therefore propose to select an appropriate case-study in order to define the relative insights offered by the neorealist and the cognitive psychology approach. The former operates at the level of the nation-state and the international political system, while the latter searches for explanations at the level of individuals and small groups. It should provide us with the opportunity to examine to which extent these approaches, that have been flourishing independently from each other over the last decade, can complement one another in the understanding of international relations. Moreover, it will thus be possible to assess the influence of variables at the individual level.

At first glance, it seems rather odd to use a case study for the assessment of a theoretical approach to international politics that aims at explaining recurrent patterns of world politics across time. It would seem unsound to judge such an approach by one observation only. As a matter of fact, it is a common objection to case studies that they cannot serve to test a theory's robustness, because that would require n-number observations. It can be argued, however, that, under certain conditions, a case study can contribute to theory formation, by constructing so-called crucial cases<sup>32</sup>. Two such crucial case studies can be distinguished: on the one hand, "most-likely" cases, which are expected to closely fit a theory, if its validity is not to be jeopardized; on the other hand, "least-likely" cases, which are expected not to fit at all. A "most-likely" case which does not fit the expected pattern will therefore raise questions about a theory's validity, while a "least-likely" case, which can be explained by a theory after all, will strengthen it<sup>33</sup>.

Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956, eventually culminating in the 1956 Suez crisis qualifies as such a crucial case. This is borne out by some puzzling aspects of the Suez crisis. In the Autumn of 1956, France and Great Britain, in connivance with Israel,

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<sup>30</sup> See for an overview of this literature: Steve Smith, 'Allison and the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Review of the Bureaucratic Politics Model of Foreign Policy Decision Making', Millennium. Journal of International Studies, (19), 1, 1980, pp. 21-40.

<sup>31</sup> Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 255.

<sup>32</sup> Harry Eckstein, 'Case Study and Theory in Political Science', in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.), Handbook of Political Science. Volume 7. Strategies of Inquiry, Addison Wesley, Reading, 1975, pp. 113-123. Eckstein shows that another type of case studies can contribute to theory formation: well-chosen case studies can be used to assess the probable validity of theories, in case large-scale testing will be costly in terms of time or resources; Eckstein, ibid., pp. 108-113.

<sup>33</sup> Eckstein, ibid., pp. 118-119.

launched a military operation in the Suez Canal area, in response to President Nasser's move that Summer to nationalize the Suez Canal Company, after two diplomatic conferences to bring the crisis to a peaceful solution had failed. In the face of a hostile national and international opinion, as well as strong economic and political pressure from the United States, France and Great Britain called a halt to hostilities within two days, and during the following months were forced out of the territory they had been able to capture.

The way this crisis has been dealt with so far in the literature illustrates precisely the problems of international relations theory, as outlined above: some analyses, mainly of a historical character<sup>34</sup>, of the Suez episode put the explanation of events either in the light of a clash between personalities, while contributions from international relations point to the context of the changed nature of the international political system. The conflict between the United Kingdom and Egypt has often been described as the personal crusade of Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden against President Gamal Abdul Nasser<sup>35</sup>, or as a conflict between the temperaments of Eden and the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. On the other hand, it is commonplace to see in the humiliation of the French and the British at Suez the confirmation of their expired role as a great power in an international political system that had undergone a transformation from a multipolar into a bipolar world.

It should be doubtful whether clashes between personalities provide the key to a complete understanding of the dynamics of a conflict that lasted as long as four months. Some recent historical analyses implicitly or explicitly underline the role of the complete British Cabinet and the Egypt Committee, the executive group installed for this crisis exclusively<sup>36</sup>. It should therefore be more fruitful to phrase the problem more in terms of the relative influence of individuals on foreign policy making. Furthermore, the appealing explanatory value of international systemic variables should not be taken at face value either: as a matter

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<sup>34</sup> Up until today only two methodical analyses from the point of view of misperception and bureaucratic politics exist: Richard Neustadt, Alliance Politics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1970, and Jönsson's case study of Suez as a failure of communication, Christer Jönsson, Communication in International Bargaining, Pinter, London, 1990, pp. 91-121. Leon Epstein's British Politics in the Suez Crisis, University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1964, provides an analysis in the context of domestic politics.

<sup>35</sup> Even Kyle, in his recent voluminous historical analysis, remarks that '[i]t is also, of course, at the human level the story about two men, each of whom came to think that the other was a bit mad'; Keith Kyle, Suez, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1991, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> This is implicit in Robert Rhodes James, Anthony Eden, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1986, as noted by Wm. Roger Louis, 'A Prima Donna with Honour', Times Literary Supplement, 31 October 1986, pp. 1207-1209. This is explicit in David Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988.

of fact, Suez remains a puzzling episode that raises more questions about the nature of change in the international political system than that it is explained by it. Three aspects that have seldom been alluded to are relevant in this respect.

First, British policy makers were well aware of changed power-relations in the world. The Suez Base Treaty, concluded with Egypt in 1954, calling for the dismantling of the impressive military base at Suez, was a product of such perceptiveness. The development of thermonuclear weapons, and the British lack of such arms, had bereft the base, linchpin of the defence of the imperial lines of communications, of its strategic primacy. British withdrawal was thus an indication of its acceptance of its new secondary role in world affairs, even though many in Britain hoped, and were confident, that this minor role would only be temporary, until Britain would possess its own nuclear arsenal. It is therefore curious that in 1956 the British deemed it opportune to move back into territory they had been so eager to get out of only two years earlier.

Second, it seems plausible to state that at Suez Britain and France were to come to terms with a new bipolar world in which military adventures could not be embarked upon without the permission of the new leaders, the Soviet Union, and, especially, the United States. This cannot explain, however, why until that moment the United States had approved of, or at least not vehemently protested against, British and French military operations in the world. France had been supported by the United States in her war-effort against the Viet Min in Indo China, and was almost relieved at Dien Bien Phu by American military aircraft, in 1954, were it not for British opposition.

Similarly, by 1956 France was deeply involved in a struggle against the Algerian independence movement F.L.N. without much protest coming from Washington. Actually, a shift in the American attitude towards the Algerian problem was not to take place until after Suez<sup>37</sup>. Likewise, until deep in 1956 Britain had been engaged in small-scale wars that had not met with much American dissent: for instance, on Cyprus it was conducting a guerilla war against Greek Cypriot resistance fighters, who were striving for the accession of Cyprus to Greece. In the Middle East in the Autumn of 1955 the United States seemed to accept British military intervention in order to repel long-term American ally Saudi Arabia from the Buraimi Oasis of Muscat, as well as from parts of the territory of Abu Dhabi. Weak American protests

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<sup>37</sup> Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace. Algeria 1954-1962*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1979 (1st edition 1977), p. 247.

were not raised until February 1956<sup>38</sup>. It is curious that Britain and France were able to act upon some form of great power prerogative to initiate military intervention up until 1956, and that they had to be called to a halt later that year, although, presumably, the international political configuration had not significantly changed by the time Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company in July 1956.

Third, even if one labels Suez as a watershed in international relations after 1945, thus implying the reduction of the United Kingdom and France to the ranks of secondary powers, some questions remain about its consequences; whether it is paralleled by a reduction in freedom to intervene with force. The decade following the Suez crisis, however, witnessed British military interventions in Oman (July 1957), Jordan (July 1958), Kuwait (June-July 1961), Cyprus (December 1963), East Africa (January 1964), and Malaysia (from 1963 to 1966)<sup>39</sup>. It is therefore unclear at first sight what Suez has meant both as an effect of the reduction of Great Britain to secondary power status, and as a cause of reduction of British military discretion. One should be very cautious indeed about the effects of changes in the configuration of the international system on the occurrence of military conflict.

Obviously then, a first glance at the Suez crisis, its prelude, and its aftermath raises a lot of questions regarding the exact way systemic variables constrain individual actors in world politics. Yet, neorealist writers claim that the Suez crisis perfectly fits their sophisticated systemic theory of balance-of-power<sup>40</sup>. It could thus be argued that Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956, culminating in the Suez crisis, constitute a crucial "most-likely" case study: neorealist theory should be able to account for the pattern of Anglo-American interactions in that period, roughly on the basis of the change from a multipolar to a bipolar international system, and the parallel change in status of the United Kingdom and the United States. This study will show that neorealist theory does not provide a sufficient understanding of this period. Rather it will be argued that systemic constraints operate through the perception of individual foreign policy makers within each country. By consequence, it will be necessary to supply a systemic theory of world politics with tools from cognitive psychology, in order to understand how states act upon constraints and opportunities offered to them by the system.

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<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez. Diaries 1951-1956, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1986, pp. 290-294, 320-324, and Eden's surprised reaction to American criticism in February 1956, Anthony Eden, Full Circle, Cassell, London, 1960, pp. 334-335.

<sup>39</sup> James H. Wylkie, The Influence of British Arms. An Analysis of British Military Intervention Since 1956, Allen and Unwin, London, 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The origins of war in neorealist theory', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, (18), 4, 1988, pp. 621-622.

It is the purpose of this study to give both systemic and individual variables their place in an analysis of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956 in general, and British foreign policy during the Suez crisis in particular. It should therefore be an attempt to estimate the explanatory value of neorealist and cognitive psychology approaches to the study of international politics. Such a case study might be liable to the reproach that, although a crucial case may test the validity of a theory, it may not necessarily proof the soundness of an approach that is based on insights from cognitive psychology. To this respect, I would like to underline that this study is not aimed at discrediting neorealism, but at outlining its strenghts and weaknesses, while exploring the possibility of supplying it with those tools from cognitive psychology that could contribute to an assessment of the role of individual foreign policy makers<sup>41</sup>.

### 1.3 Research questions:

All these considerations add up to two major research questions: (1) To what extent can neorealism explain Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956 in a satisfactory way? (2) In what measure do tools from cognitive psychology, that put emphasis on the influence of individual foreign policy makers, complement a neorealist analysis of that period<sup>42</sup>? The former entails an assessment of neorealism as an approach to international relations; the latter requires an evaluation of the possibility of analyzing the impact of individuals on international politics. By corollary, this study also aims at an appreciation of approaches such as "Operational Code" and "Groupthink"<sup>43</sup>. Inevitably, this study is to shed some light on

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<sup>41</sup> Another approach which puts an emphasis on the role of individuals is rational choice theory, but this study does not deal extensively with it. Appendix 1 will give an overview of its potential relevance to this study.

<sup>42</sup> This monograph primarily deals with political processes in the United Kingdom, although it would have been as relevant to have included France as an empirical case. Omitting the latter is due to practical difficulties. As opposed to Great Britain, where most Government documents (should) become available to the public after 30 years, France practices a much more restricted policy in these matters. French secondary sources that are available do not allow for an analysis as intended here. Therefore, the empirical analysis will be limited to the British side, although references to French decision making processes will be made where possible.

<sup>43</sup> In its empirical analysis this study will make extensive use of the so-called 'Operational Code-Construct' and the 'Groupthink-phenomenon' (cf. Chapters 4, 6, 10-17). These methods are both examples of research designs that concentrate on a limited number of critical independent variables, which can be applied to various cases and may thus contribute to theory-building; cf. Alexander L. George, 'Case studies and theory development: the method of structured, focused comparison', in Paul Lauren (ed.), Diplomacy. New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy, The Free Press, New York, 1979, pp. 43-69.

postwar Anglo-American relations in general, and on the Suez crisis in particular. An analysis of Suez with tools from international relations and cognitive psychology cannot be but a secondary purpose. In this context, the limits of such an analysis should be pointed out.

1. It is not meant to be a historical analysis. Suez is one of the most investigated episodes of British foreign policy. I do not wish to add another detailed account of what exactly happened between Nasser's announcement of the nationalization of Suez Canal Company on 26 July 1956 and the cease-fire of 6 November 1956, which put an end to the hostilities that had started at 29 October 1956, when Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula, and dropped para-troops near the Suez Canal in order to allow British and French troops to intervene with heavy bombings two days later, and with a true armada on 5 November 1956. Moreover, I am not interested in the collision between France, Britain and Israel as such, only as a product of the decision making process<sup>44</sup>.

If this study is to shed new light on known facts, it will occur as a by-product of an approach that tries to deal with the Suez episode using two different perspectives within international relations theory. Its aims, however, are primarily theoretical and methodological. However, this should not cause it to suffer from a possible negligence of historical evidence: it is all too tempting in political science not to be too precise with the available historical evidence related to one's case-study. A sound basis of historical research is, therefore, a necessary condition for the plausibility of the empirical evidence presented in this study.

2. It is not meant to be a study in psycho-politics. Although much emphasis will be laid on the cognitive belief system of the British Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, this study is not conceived as a political biography of Eden, nor as an assessment of his personality. Even though some aspects of both will have to be touched upon, such as in answering the question of how Eden's belief system was shaped by his political career, one should not expect definite answers to often raised questions, such as Eden's true motivation when he resigned from Neville Chamberlain's Government in 1938, or the influence of his notorious bad tempers on his policies.

3. Institutional constraints on behaviour. The main issue of this study remains to shed some light on the question of whether it is possible to ascertain to what extent individuals affect world politics. Due attention will be paid to the impact of insitutional variables that constrain the behaviour of individuals, such as domestic politics and the organizational context

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<sup>44</sup> The most recent contribution is Keith Kyle's Suez, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1991.

in which policymakers have to operate. These factors, however, are not the focus of this study, but rather serve as control variables on the influence of individual variables.

#### 1.4 Outline of the study

This study consists of four parts. Part I deals with the strength and weaknesses of neorealism. In chapter 2 the question will be answered whether it is possible at all to speak of a neorealist approach to international relations; next, the matter will be addressed to which extent neorealism can be said to have strengthened traditional realist claims by giving them more scientific rigour. Chapter 3 assesses the explanatory value of neorealism for an analysis of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956. It is concluded that an analysis of the impact of changes of the structure of international system on its units should include a systematic incorporation of processes of perception at the level of the foreign policy elite.

Part II discusses the feasibility of such an endeavour. In chapter 4 it will be argued that cognitive belief systems of individual decision makers may provide an important clue to understanding the influence of individual perceptions on international politics. The "Operational Code Construct" is selected as an appropriate tool for such an analysis. In chapter 5 and 6 several factors are discussed which might interfere with the relation between individual perceptions and international politics, such as bureaucratic politics, domestic politics, personality, and small group dynamics.

Part III offers an empirical analysis of Anglo-American relations between 1951 and 1955. Chapter 7 deals with the general attitude of the British foreign policy elite towards international affairs, while chapter 8 presents the cognitive belief system of Sir Anthony Eden. Both chapters give several clues as to the likely behaviour of members of the British Government in general, and of Eden particular, in the event of a foreign policy crisis. Chapter 9 involves an examination of the nature of international crises and the determination of the exact moment of the start of the Suez crisis.

Part IV offers an analysis of British decision making during the Suez crisis. Chapters 10 through 15 identify six decisional conflicts in which British decision makers are faced with stress-arousing dilemmas. Each chapter attempts to reconstruct the decision making process in the United Kingdom during the crisis. In that attempt, four variables will be taken into account: the individual cognitive belief system of Sir Anthony Eden, the groupthink-phenomenon, organizational constraints as well as considerations of domestic politics. Chapter 16 presents an assessment of the relative weight of each variable at the various stages of the

decision making process. Finally, chapter 17 discusses the extent to which tools from cognitive psychology succeed in explaining parts of the Suez crisis that neorealism could not account for.



**PART I: THE CHALLENGE OF NEOREALISM**

## Introduction to Part I

Over the last decade it has become normal practice to speak of a neorealist approach to the study of international relations. In order to assess its strengths and weaknesses, however, an attempt should be made to describe the characteristics of such an approach, and to identify neorealist authors. The original debate on neorealism<sup>1</sup> has been confusing, because the identification of the approach and of its followers became the target of much criticism: various authors, using diverging approaches, had been put together and, supposedly, quotes from their works had been chosen to fit the argument that such a thing as neorealism existed.

In order to avoid similar misunderstandings, this study starts from the claim that neorealism comes very close to an approach that aims at imitating the natural sciences' approach to science. Chapter 2 will thus use the characteristics of a positivist approach to organize the debate around neorealism. Once the characteristics of a positivist approach to the study of international relations have been formulated, it becomes possible to have a serious debate about the question to what extent neorealism adheres to such an ideal and in what measure neorealist authors (want to) come close to such an approach. The introduction of positivism does not aim at an analysis and assessment from the point of view of the philosophy of science, but is meant as a pragmatic solution to the problem of identifying neorealism.

Next, chapter 2 answers the question whether neorealism has succeeded in preserving the premises of traditional realism and in adding more scientific rigour to it. It will be argued that neorealism has indeed done so, and even managed to incorporate areas that were no primary concern of traditional realism, such as international economic relations.

In chapter 3 the neorealist approach is applied to the so-called crucial case of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956. Emphasis is put on the Suez crisis and on the 1945-1951 period. Unfortunately, neorealism offers a partial understanding only. It is argued that a neorealist analysis has to take perceptions and expectations of individual foreign policy makers into account.

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<sup>1</sup> See the special issue of International Organization, (38), 2, 1984.

## Chapter 2: The challenge of Neorealism

### 2.1 The emergence of neorealism

For almost five decades now realism has been the dominant approach to the study of international relations. Despite the various criticisms that have been raised against it, its tools are still widely employed throughout the world. The realist conception of world politics concentrates around the two interrelated notions of state sovereignty and international anarchy. States are independent entities that operate in an environment where a central authority is absent. Because there is no institution on which states can rely that enforces the rules, states have to look after themselves in order to survive. Because no agent checks on the behaviour of neighbour states, each state has to remain mistrustful of other states: these are the elements of the so-called security dilemma, which forces states to live under conditions of competition and conflict<sup>1</sup>.

This conception of world politics relies on three assumptions: (1) that states are the most important actors in world politics, (2) that world politics can be analyzed as if states were carefully calculating, utility maximizing, unitary, rational actors, and (3) that states will seek power in order to survive in such an anarchical world, and therefore will calculate their interests in terms of power<sup>2</sup>.

Even though few realists explicitly rely upon these three assumptions, all of them work within the terms of the security dilemma. On the whole, realism has produced three types of theories<sup>3</sup>: there is first the theory of world government, conceived of as a social contract between states that abolishes their sovereignty and establishes a single sovereign government. There is second the theory of balance of power, that points to an overall equilibrium among states which emerges out of their struggle for power. There is third the collective security theory that argues that states should reach a formal agreement to take collective action against any kind of aggression. According to Lijphart, all other notions of international relations, such as the concept of world society, international law, or geopolitics, are derived from this hard core of thinking based on the security dilemma<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Arend Lijphart, 'The Structure of the Theoretical Revolution in International Relations', International Studies Quarterly, (18), 1, 1974, pp. 42-44.

<sup>2</sup> Robert O. Keohane, 'Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond', in Ada Finifter (ed.), Political Science: the State of the Discipline, APSA, Washington DC, 1985, p. 508.

<sup>3</sup> Lijphart, 'Structure of the Theoretical Revolution', pp. 44-49.

<sup>4</sup> Lijphart, ibid., pp. 49-53.

We should note, however, that two of these three notions, namely that of world government and of collective security are more of a prescriptive than of a descriptive kind, and thus seem to reflect the discipline's strong normative commitment to world order and the need to limit conflict. This confusion of descriptive and prescriptive elements, and the observation that only balance-of-power theory seems a major contribution of realist thinking to the understanding of world politics, have been a main source of concern for students of international relations.

The fact that realism has been the dominant approach within the study of international relations is often held to account for the field's poor philosophical basis as well as for its scant accomplishments as an empirical discipline, two types of complaints that were common in the 1960s<sup>5</sup> and 1970s<sup>6</sup> respectively. Empirical analyses that were guided by realist assumptions tended to reject the hypotheses formulated, or at best to produce only trivial findings<sup>7</sup>. Basing themselves on these outcomes, Mansbach and Vasquez argue for the formulation of a new paradigm for world politics, and try to develop one around the concept of issue. In their appraisal of realism, however, they do not pay attention to the important question whether perhaps the alleged poverty of the realist discipline can be explained by its lack of scientific rigour.

As a matter of fact, it seems that part of the discipline's theoretical and empirical limitations can be explained by the lack of attention that has so far been paid to the ontological and epistemological questions that underlie any study of international politics: neither the nature of international reality, nor the place of individuals in that setting, nor the route to be followed in order to obtain empirical knowledge have been systematically discussed by realist writers. Yet research is obviously conducted, or at least guided by some implicit ideas about these questions.

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<sup>5</sup> Martin Wight, 'Why Is There No International Theory?', in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds.), Diplomatic Investigations. Essays in the Theory of International Politics, Allen and Unwin, London, 1966, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> In the mid-Seventies, Harry Eckstein and Ted Gurr were 'struck by the paucity of its theories, or even theoretical approaches or frameworks, that apply both to politics and to their relations (-), except at very general and uninformative levels. (-) And yet, simply because scholarly convention and administrative habit identify international relations and politics, people continue to devote themselves to distracting exercises that might justify the habit. The results are often trivial and embarrassing', Harry Eckstein and Ted Robert Gurr, Patterns of Authority. A Structural Basis for Political Enquiry, John Wiley and Sons, New York, etc., 1975, p. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Mansbach and John A. Vasquez, In Search of Theory. A New Paradigm for Global Politics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1981, pp. 13-14.

The fact that realist assumptions have been, and still are, employed so widely, can be understood, in part, by the close relationship between the study of international politics and the practical application of its findings to the formulation of foreign policy. This stimulated the development of, often insightful, studies formally geared to giving policy advice. It thus inhibited the detachment of students from their subject, as well as the development of empirical analyses conducted on the basis of 'scientific' criteria. In such a situation it is not surprising that realism should have become the dominant framework of research, as it allows students to base their work on easily available national data from newspapers and from statistical reports<sup>8</sup>. However, before rejecting realism altogether, as Mansbach and Vasquez suggest, it should be asked whether realism would have done better, if it had followed certain 'scientific' rules more closely. A new wave of writings, neorealism, has indeed asked that question.

The emergence of this new current in international relations theory has received much attention of late, and has been given several labels, such as modern realism, new realism, structural realism, and the one this study has adopted, neorealism<sup>9</sup>. The appearance of neorealist studies can be understood as the product of a changed Zeitgeist, underlying the research agenda of the field. Since the late 1970s North-South relations have been less in vogue while East-West themes have become more popular; international commercial and monetary problems are now described as clashes of interests between nation states rather than as the product and cause of transnational processes that used to be a popular topic a decade ago; moreover, some events of the late 1970s and the early 1980s suggested that the use of military force remained an important element of world politics, even in an era of nuclear deterrence: one only has to look at the direct and indirect military interventions by the superpowers in Africa, Central America and South West Asia<sup>10</sup>.

Neorealism is seen as the saviour of the old realist tradition, because it supplies realist notions of world politics with truly scientific tools. Two elements in the discussion on neorealism seem to justify this interpretation. First, there are attempts to give typically realist concepts new, and more rigorous, operational formulations. Thus Gochmann and Leng wished

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<sup>8</sup> Mansbach and Vasquez, ibid., p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Rosenau, 'A Pre-Theory Revisited'; Keohane, 'Theory of World Politics'; Richard Little, 'Structuralism and Neo Realism', in Margot Light and A.J.R. Groom (eds.), International Relations. A Handbook of Current Theory, Frances Pinter, London, 1985, pp. 74-89; and Michael Nicholson, 'Methodology', in Light and Groom, op. cit., pp. 90-99.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph S. Nye, 'Neoliberalism and Neorealism', World Politics, (40), 2, 1988, pp. 236-237; Joseph Grieco, 'Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation', International Organization, (42), 3, 1988, pp. 290-292.

to give more analytical and empirical substance to Morgenthau's notion of policy makers' prudence in militarized conflicts between nation-states<sup>11</sup>. There are also efforts to formulate notions about the formation of alliances between nation-states, a traditional realist subject of study<sup>12</sup>. A third example comes from recent attempts at giving quantitative indicators to the position of nation states in the international political system<sup>13</sup>.

Second, the role of the political philosophers who have always been considered the Founding Fathers of the discipline of international relations is being reevaluated. There is specifically a strong debate over the question whether neorealists are entitled to embrace Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Rousseau as their predecessors<sup>14</sup>. Discussions of a theoretical character are thus very alive.

It therefore seems legitimate to ask whether, for instance, Rosenau is correct in stating that neorealism lends itself 'readily to a natural sciences' format'<sup>15</sup>, and whether it is true that neorealism is able to correct the shortfalls of realism by fitting it into such a scientific jacket<sup>16</sup>. It should thus be possible to construct operational formulations to distinguish between objective and subjective aspects of international political life, and to incorporate international economic processes, without having to give up the old realist emphasis on power, security, and the national interest<sup>17</sup>. Neorealists, therefore, make explicit and try to systemize

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<sup>11</sup> Charles S. Gochmann and Russell J. Leng, 'Realpolitik and the Road to War. An Analysis of Attributes and Behavior', International Studies Quarterly, (27), 1983, pp. 99 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen M., Origins of Alliances, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1987; Wallace J. Thies, 'Crises and the Study of Alliance Politics', Armed Forces and Society, (15) 3, 1989, pp.

<sup>13</sup> E.g., Erich Weede and Joachim Kummer, 'Some Criticism of Recent Work on World System Status, Inequality and Democracy', International Journal of Comparative Sociology, (26), 3/4, 1985, pp. 135-148.

<sup>14</sup> R.B.J. Walker, 'Realism, Change, and International Political Theory', International Studies Quarterly, (31), 1987, pp. 65-86; Daniel Gast, 'Thucydides and Neorealism', International Studies Quarterly, (33), 1, 1989, pp. 3-27; Michael C. Williams, 'Rousseau, Realism, and "Realpolitik"', Millennium, (15), 2, 1989, pp. 188-204. Another example is Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, who explicitly argues that his expected utility theory of war initiation is an applied version of a theme that runs through the work of classical authors, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, 'The Contribution of Expected Utility Theory to the Study of International Conflict', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, (18), 4, 1988, p. 629. A critical analysis of the debate around Thucydides is given by Michael Doyle, 'Thucydidean Realism', Millennium, (16), 3, 1990, pp. 223-238.

<sup>15</sup> James N. Rosenau, 'A Pre-Theory Revisited', p. 252.

<sup>16</sup> Richard K. Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', International Organization, (38), 2, 1984, p. 230.

<sup>17</sup> Ashley, Ibid..

notions that have since long been present within the dominant approach to international relations.

We need now to see how far neorealism enables us really to overcome the weaknesses of realism. If this were the case, then the raison d'être for an alternative paradigm would be less clear than Mansbach and Vasquez suggest. In what follows, therefore, neorealism will be put to the three tests that were discussed in Chapter 1: (1) Can neorealism explain international political reality ? (2) Does neorealism prepare the grounds for relevant research, that is, can it contribute to an understanding of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956, and, specifically, of British foreign policy during the Suez crisis ? (3) Are there any alternative approaches that seems better able to provide satisfactory answers ?

## 2.2 Can a study of international relations follow positivist guidelines ?

The claim that neorealism follows 'scientific prescriptions' actually means that neorealists proceed from the idea that the social sciences can and ought to conform to the standards set by the natural sciences<sup>18</sup>. The philosophy of sciences invoked by this claim is called positivism. Before one can assess to what extent neorealists are also positivists, one should set out the premises of positivism. Any philosophy of science will discuss the questions of (1) the nature of reality, and (2) the correct road to arrive at knowledge about that reality. In this paragraph the core of positivist thinking about these ontological and epistemological questions will be presented, followed by a reconstruction of how a positivist view of international relations could be formulated as an ideal-type, which will next serve as a point of reference for an assessment of the neorealist position.

### 2.2.1 What is the nature of reality ?

Because positivism believes that the goal of research should be the formulation of theories that explain newly discovered laws, it is indispensable that reality display a pattern of regularity: only if certain events occur again and again, will it be possible to discover laws, and to allow for the falsification of hypotheses and theories<sup>19</sup>. Regularity is the basis for the belief that causation exists, and that thus explanation and prediction become possible . The

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<sup>18</sup> David Papineau, For Science in the Social Sciences, Macmillan, London and Basingstoke, 1978, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Vernon Van Dyke, Political Science.- A Philosophical Analysis, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1960, pp. 27 ff.; Arnold Brecht, Political Theory. The Foundations of Twentieth Century Political Thought, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1959, p. 14.

important point is that there must first be an element which causes the pattern of regularity; second, that there are elements (often called data, or phenomena, or events) that allow for the observation of the pattern of regularity, although they need not be constituents of the pattern of regularity<sup>20</sup>.

When applied to the study of international relations a pattern of regularity can be found in the traditional realist conception of world politics as an immensely durable anarchy. Constant anarchy imposes self-help conditions on states which require them to struggle for their mere existence. In doing so, states maintain this anarchical situation<sup>21</sup>. It comes as no surprise that in such a conception of international political reality most attention will be paid to problems of conflict between nations. Implicitly, as Wight observes, this situation is regarded as a 'realm of recurrence and repetition; it is the field in which political action is most regularly necessitous'<sup>22</sup>. Because dominant approaches develop symbols and metaphors<sup>23</sup>, it is worth noticing that the 1648 Treaty of Westfalia has come to symbolize the construction of the modern system of nation-states, and that the Hobbesian metaphor of the state of nature has become widely employed to characterize the international political system<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> This does away with one of the most common objections to the 'scientific' model, namely that every historical event is unique by itself: positivism would thus be irrelevant, it is said, because, unlike an experiment, a segment of history can never be repeated. The positivist would retort that, while to a certain extent every historical event is unique, because of the number of variables which can never be expected to arrange themselves in the same order again, it is also the case that any explanation has implicit reference to a general law: the observer's interpretation will depend on generalized assumptions about historical cause and effect, which could not be possibly deduced from the particular sequence he wishes to explain. One is therefore looking for certain constant factors that can be detected out of similarities in certain historical events; Walter Runciman, Social Science and Political Theory, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, (2nd. edition), 1969, pp. 8-11; Hans J. Morgenthau, Scientific Man versus Power Politics, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1946, p. 127; R.K. Atkinson, Knowledge and Explanation in History. An Introduction to the Philosophy of History, The Macmillan Press, London and Basingstoke, 1978, p. 12; Brecht, Political Theory, pp. 88-91.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Barry Buzan, 'Peace, Power and Security: Contending Concepts in the Study of International Relations', Journal of Peace Research, (21), 2, 1984, pp. 109-125; Rosenau, 'A Pre-Theory Revisited'; Lijphart, 'The Structure of Theoretical Revolution'.

<sup>22</sup> Wight, 'Why is there no International Theory?', p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> According to Kuhn, quoted by Lijphart, 'The Structure of Theoretical Revolution', p. 53.

<sup>24</sup> Lijphart, ibid., p. 44; several authors have warned against the use of this metaphor, either because international reality does not reflect a Hobbesian state of nature, or because it is based on a biased reading of Hobbes's text; Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society. A Study of Order in World Politics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977, p. 41; Donald Hanson, 'Thomas Hobbes's "Highway to Peace"', International Organization, (38), 2, 1984, esp. pp. 331-332.



Traditionally, in the study of international relations three types of factors surface as constituents of such a pattern of regularity: characteristics of the individual, the nation-state, or the international political system. In studies of international affairs, the effect of these causal factors, and thus the pattern of regularity of world politics itself, is revealed by the behaviour of nation-states.

1. The individual. One way of explaining the recurrence of war is to point to the characteristics of human nature and behaviour. Basically, one can claim that the human species is inherently aggressive, or thirsty for power. In order to achieve a more peaceful world, one will have to induce, or wait for, changes in man's nature<sup>25</sup>. But, as Steiner explains, this is an illogical possibility, because the view that world politics anarchical, implies that man is incapable of acquiring knowledge that could enable him to change himself or his condition in any fundamental way<sup>26</sup>.

2. The nation-state. One can also look for causes of international conflict by examining the characteristics of nation-states. The proposition is that certain types of countries are more likely to engage in warfare than others<sup>27</sup>. Types of countries can be distinguished on the basis of the character of the regime or on the relative stability of the regime. An example of the latter is the popular explanation that wars occur because unstable regimes try to raise domestic support by starting a fight against another country<sup>28</sup>.

The former type of distinction is shown by those authors who claim that the ideology of the regime will make a state more or less war-prone: both capitalist and socialist states are

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<sup>25</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, Man, the State and War. A Theoretical Analysis, Columbia University Press, New York and London, (2nd. edition), 1959, pp. 16-19.

<sup>26</sup> Miriam Steiner, 'Human Nature and Truth as World Order Issues', International Organization, (34), 3, 1980, pp. 340-342.

<sup>27</sup> Waltz, Man, the State and War, pp. 80-85.

<sup>28</sup> This research tradition was very popular in the late 1960s, but was still pursued in the 1980s; e.g., Raymond Tanter, 'Dimensions of Conflict Behavior Within and Between Nations, 1958-1960', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (10), 1, 1967, pp. 41-67; Jonathan Wilkenfeld, 'Domestic and Foreign Conflict', in James N. Rosenau (ed.), Conflict Behavior and Linkage Politics, The Free Press, New York, 1970, pp. 107-123; Edward L. Kick, 'World-System Properties and Military Intervention-Internal War Linkages', Journal of Political and Military Sociology, (11), 2, 1983, pp. 185-208.

said to be inherently both peaceful and aggressive<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, liberal theoreticians claim that only democracies will promote international trade and, thus, peace<sup>30</sup>.

A third way to distinguish types of countries is to look at their relative geopolitical disposition. A school of international relations, geopolitics, is based on the assumption that certain geographical characteristics will induce to military conflict<sup>31</sup>.

3. International political system. A third factor that explains the way international relations are conducted is the nature of the international political system. Because in an anarchical system, 'any state may at any time use force, all states must constantly be ready either to counter force, or to pay the cost of weakness, The requirements of state action are, in this view, imposed by the circumstances in which all states exist'<sup>32</sup>. The advantage of this type of analysis is that it becomes possible to ignore the controversial issue of human nature<sup>33</sup>.

Within a positivist framework international relations will have to work with discernible basic elements in order to proceed from the basic idea of an anarchical regularity to empirical observations. The nation-state is just such an atomistic unit one that can serve as such a basic element<sup>34</sup>. It is worth noticing that the image of the international political system as a body

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<sup>29</sup> In several theories of imperialism, such as Lenin's, aggression of capitalist states is explained by an internal characteristic: their mode of production; cf. Doyle, Empires, pp. 23-24; similarly, the foreign policy of socialist states is often explained by their allegedly expansionist ideology; e.g. Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc. Unity and Conflict, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1971.

<sup>30</sup> E.g., Robert Gilpin, (with the assistance of Jean M. Gilpin), The Political Economy of International Relations, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987, pp. 56-58.

<sup>31</sup> Recently, geopolitics seems to have been renamed 'Political Geography', as evidenced by the appearance of a new journal, Political Geography Quarterly. Although such notions as the scientific frontier, (Robert Strausz-Hupé, Geopolitics. The Struggle for Space and Power, Arno Press, New York, 1972 (1942), pp. 225-239) seldom appear in them, modern works are still based on presumed causal relations between geographical space and political power; Oyvind Osterud, 'The uses and abuses of geopolitics', Journal of Peace Research, (25), 2, 1988, p. 192. Examples of recent geopolitical writings include Patrick O'Sullivan, Geopolitics, Croom Helm, London, 1986, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, Game Plan. A Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the U.S.-Soviet Contest, Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, 1986.

<sup>32</sup> Waltz, Man, the State and War, p. 160.

<sup>33</sup> Steiner, 'Human nature and truth', p. 336.

<sup>34</sup> Richard K. Ashley, The Political Economy of War and Peace The Sino-Soviet-American Triangle and the Modern Security Problematique, Frances Pinter, London, 1980, pp. 304-305, 242-248.

in which nation-states act like atoms<sup>35</sup>, is often invoked: nation-states are the units (atoms) of analysis through which patterns of regularity can be discovered. Each national state will have its own interest, and its power capabilities will be ultimately determined by economic strength, which forms the most important tool for the explanation of a state's behaviour<sup>36</sup>. By implication, it is considered less relevant to examine the characteristics of the foreign policy elite, or of political leaders, or of individuals in general, in order to understand world politics. Individual behaviour can be reduced to an individual's own basic, pessimistic, nature, to the characteristics of the country they happen to live in, or to the constraints imposed by the international system. It is unnecessary to look at individuals' beliefs, or reasons, or motives: knowledge of world politics can be acquired by looking at nation-states the behaviour of which reveals the working of basic causal forces in international relations.

### 2.2.2 The correct way to understand international reality

Basically, two ideas about the acquisition of scientific knowledge prevail in the social sciences, and by consequence, also in the field of international relations. On the one hand, scholars believe that theory and generalizations come through the accumulation of data. This can be called inductive enumeration. On the other hand, one finds scholars who wish to clearly separate the collection of data from their explanation by the formulation of theories. This view can be labelled deductive falsificationism. One of the fundamental problems of the study of international relations up until the mid-1970s has been its reliance either on the mere collection of empirical data, or on a more narrative way of presenting arguments. The power of neorealism lies in its adoption of deductive falsificationism.

1. Inductive enumeration. This conceives of science as an empirical discipline that grows thanks to slow, modest, and piece-meal accumulation of data. Theory is derived from these data as soon as a certain threshold has been reached that permits the formulation and testing of a generalization. Theory is almost expected to emerge out of the empirical generalizations that are accumulated and merged into even greater generalizations<sup>37</sup>. For the study of international relations this implies that quantitative techniques are appropriate in order to analyze a reality which is supposed to be based on the regular behaviour patterns of nation-states, as they try to survive in an anarchical political system. Much of the postwar history of

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<sup>35</sup> Or billiard balls.

<sup>36</sup> Ashley, op. cit., pp. 282-283, Rosenau, 'A Pre-Theory Revisited', p. 248.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. M.J. Jackson, 'The Application of Method in the Construction of Political Science Theory', Canadian Journal of Political Science, (5), 1972, pp. 404-406.

the study of international politics can be written as the collection of data on international conflict. It has been argued that most research within this framework has yielded very poor results<sup>38</sup>. It is therefore no surprise that many studies did not develop truly sophisticated theories at all<sup>39</sup>.

2. Deductive falsificationism. In this vision the mere accumulation of data can never produce any theory. It can help to make one think of possible explanations of the findings, but such a theory is created in the minds of men, and never follows automatically from correlations between data. As long as it stays in the mind of the individual researcher, it remains unverifiable for other scholars. It is therefore important to take explanation out of this context of discovery and to bring it into the context of justification. In this way it is made falsifiable by more research which can be conducted, in principle, by anyone. This requires the deduction of falsifiable observations from certain theoretical premises. This implies that one criterion to judge the soundness of an empirical theory is its consistency and its being non-tautological. Moreover, a theory should be framed in universal terms, because then it will become easier to falsify. In this view the accumulation of data serves as a check on predictions that can be deduced from a theory. Very few works in international relations up until the emergence of neorealism have employed the epistemology of deductive falsificationism. Those scholars that did not devote themselves to the collection of data often worked within a narrative, historical approach to provide the evidence that support their claims<sup>40</sup>. The theoretical poverty of traditional realism is shown by the fact that even realism's classical textbook, Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations, cannot be considered to contain an empirical

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<sup>38</sup> Vasquez, The Power of Power Politics, passim.

<sup>39</sup> One can therefore sympathize with Goldman's claim that it seems imaginary to speak of the existence of 'realist' theory, Kjell Goldman, 'The Concept of "Realism" as a Source of Confusion', Cooperation and Conflict, (23), 1, 1988, p. 1-2, 7.

<sup>40</sup> For the distinction between traditionalists and behaviouralists, see, for instance, James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr., Contending Theories of International Relations. A Comprehensive Study, Harper and Row, New York, 1981, chapter 1. I think it is wrong to identify traditionalism with the 'English school of international relations', as Rengger is suggesting, given the work of many non-British authors, such as Morgenthau, Niebuhr, and Aron, amongst others. I do agree with Rengger though, that many traditionalists should be reinterpreted in light of their use of historical interpretation, which would place them into the world of phenomenological hermeneutics, rather than positivism; N.J. Rengger, 'Serpents and Doves in Classical International Theory', Millennium. Journal of International Studies, (17), 2, 1988, p. 215-217.

theory of international relations<sup>41</sup>. Morgenthau did not present his ideas about the international struggle for power as an axiomatic set of formulations from which expectations about the empirical world can be deduced. Moreover, Morgenthau's analysis cannot be reconstructed in such a way, so that his claims cannot be judged either on their inner logic, or on their value as generators of empirical hypothesis<sup>42</sup>. The theoretical richness of realism, measured by the criteria of a positivist approach, thus seems rather limited. We must examine, therefore, whether neorealism, which aims at giving realist notions a more sophisticated basis, has performed any better.

### 2.3 Does neorealism follow the positivist approach ?

One can safely say that neorealism is following a positivist approach only (1) if one can conclude that its adherents all conceive of international relations as a pattern of regularity, (2) if all deem it possible to formulate general theories about such a stable environment, (3) if they claim that this stable pattern of behaviour is caused by characteristics of man, the nation-state, or the nature of the international political system, (4) if the only units of analysis need to be nation-states, that look for ways to improve their power position, and (5) if, in order to understand these phenomena, students will either follow the path of inductive enumeration, or of deductive falsificationism.

Such an assessment assumes that we know who those neorealists are. The 'discoverer' of neorealism, Richard Ashley, came to his conclusions after having read the works of Kenneth Waltz, Robert Keohane, Stephen Krasner, Robert Gilpin, Robert Tucker, George Modelski, 'and many others'<sup>43</sup>. I propose to take these authors into consideration and to estimate to which extent they conform to the positivist picture. This method should provide a safeguard against giving an unbalanced view of the authors, and against picking out just the passages that

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<sup>41</sup> At least, such is J.W. Nobel's thesis, in his The Utopia of Realism. Hans J. Morgenthau's Theory of Power Politics and his Critique of American Foreign Policy in the Cold War, Amsterdam, Jan Mets, 1985 (a dissertation written in Dutch), notably pp. 36-46, 74-88. Nobel is severely criticized for his notion of epistemological criteria by R.H. Lieshout, 'Over het "Kritisch" Toepassen van "Zuivere" Theorieën', Acta Politica, (20), 4, 1985, pp. 451-464; Lieshout's judgment of Morgenthau's theory, however, gets only more severe.

<sup>42</sup> Lieshout, 'Over het "Kritisch" toepassen van "Zuivere" Theorieën', pp. 454-460.

<sup>43</sup> Amongst whom we expect to find the economist, Charles Kindleberger, who is mentioned as a neorealist, but who remains absent in Ashley's footnotes and analysis; Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', p. 227.

happen to fit the argument<sup>44</sup>. It will be shown that all alleged neorealists conceive of international relations as a permanent anarchy, that most of them find the cause of that regularity in the characteristics of nation-states, although some of them, stress the nature of the international political system, that all of them make use of the nation-state as unit of analysis, that none of them engages in inductive enumeration, but that most of them adopt deductive falsificationism instead as the route to theory formation, although, regrettably, few are explicit about these matters.

### 2.3.1 A pattern of regularity

All neorealist spokesmen see international relations as an anarchical environment which is likely to remain its main feature for a long time to come. Actually, some of them, such as Robert Tucker and Robert Gilpin, explicitly want to show that world politics has been of an essentially anarchical nature for quite some time, which is not likely to be replaced very soon. Tucker's main thesis is that this will be so despite the call for more equality of distribution of wealth in the world<sup>45</sup>. For him international relations constitute a self-help system in which nation-states enjoy legal equality, expressed in the principle of sovereignty, but where they have to face factual inequality at the same time. In such a society competition rather than cooperation is the rule. Even though anarchy is institutionalized in and possibly to a certain extent mitigated by international law, the basic dilemma is not overcome, because rights in international law tend to reflect the distribution of power within the system<sup>46</sup>. Pressure for redistribution by Third World countries is not likely to provoke the often predicted change of the international system: Following his analysis of the politics of international redistribution since the period of decolonization, Tucker argues that the prime movers in that demand for more equality will still be nation-states: 'it is through the existing framework of states, sovereign and independent, that disparities in income and wealth are to be reduced, if they are to be reduced at all'<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, it is not the essential structure of the international system

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<sup>44</sup> Gilpin thinks Ashley has done just this, Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', International Organization, (38), 2, 1984, pp. 287-289. The danger of using the 'positivist litmus test', however, would be the imposition of a rigidity on authors that they themselves might never opt for; cf. Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', History and Theory, (8), 1, 1969, pp. 3-53.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Tucker, The Inequality of Nations, Basic Books, New York, 1977, p. 178.

<sup>46</sup> Tucker, ibid., p. 1-15.

<sup>47</sup> Tucker, ibid., p. 105.

that has been challenged by the call for egalitarianism, but the distribution of wealth and power within that system<sup>48</sup>. Tucker's analysis of global distributional politics reveals that the extent to which more equality is reached depends on the 'ability and willingness of the respective states to bear the costs'<sup>49</sup>. Tucker has thus saved realism from the well-known criticism that it could not cope with North-South relations. He shows that redistributive problems can still be analyzed in terms of international anarchy and the interests of nation-states<sup>50</sup>.

Robert Gilpin is convinced that the nature of international politics has not changed since the days of Thucydides<sup>51</sup>. For him world politics has always been and still is a struggle for wealth and power among independent actors in an anarchical world<sup>52</sup>. Although they discuss time-spans not as vast as Gilpin's, George Modelski and Kenneth Waltz basically agree that since the late Middle Ages international politics can be characterized as an anarchical system of nation-states which have displayed regular patterns of behaviour ever since<sup>53</sup>. Waltz goes furthest when he recognizes that international politics is a 'bounded realm or domain' where 'law-like regularities' can be observed<sup>54</sup>. Stephen Krasner and Robert Keohane are less explicit about regularities of behaviour that can be observed in international politics, but both

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<sup>48</sup> Tucker, ibid., p. 117.

<sup>49</sup> Tucker, ibid., p. 77.

<sup>50</sup> A similar, perhaps even more sophisticated analysis is offered by Stephen Krasner, in his study of attempts by Third World countries to change dependency relations with the First World. Exactly because Third World countries lack the power capabilities to impose their preferences on the First World, they try to modify the existing order by the piecemeal foundation of international regimes that somehow improve their position. Nevertheless, exactly because they depend, in the end, on the First World's willingness to tolerate international forums it produces undesired results. For Krasner the gap between North and South is an enduring character of the international system. Stephen D. Krasner, Structural Conflict. The Third World Against Global Liberalism, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984, pp. 12 ff., 313.

<sup>51</sup> Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', pp. 297-298.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> George Modelski, Long Cycles in World Politics, Macmillan, Houndmills, etc., 1987, p. 1; Modelski, 'The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State', Comparative Studies in Society and History, (20), 1978, pp. 214-235; Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, Addison Wesley, Reading, 1979, p. 95, makes a distinction between Medieval anarchy and the modern world system in which nation-states have become the relevant actors rather than Medieval Princes, but he states that the game has always been the same, and that the nation-state is likely to remain the most important actor for a long time.

<sup>54</sup> Waltz, ibid., p. 116.

stress the importance of the context of an anarchical political system in which nation-states have to operate<sup>55</sup>.

### 2.3.2 Basic causal factors

Some neorealist authors look at the characteristics of nation-states in order to explain behaviour within this permanent anarchy, while others stress the importance of the international political system. None of them tries to account for international politics in terms of characteristics of individuals, even though some do say that, in the end, only individuals act<sup>56</sup>. The point is, however, that a parsimonious analysis of world politics only needs nation-states and system-structure.

1. Nation-state. Robert Tucker, in his analysis of challenges to the present international distribution of power and wealth, explains the dynamics of world politics in terms of characteristics of nation-states<sup>57</sup>: relatively less well-to-do states will challenge the status quo, while the richer ones will tend to defend it. Similarly, Robert Gilpin claims that the recurrence of cycles in which states will challenge and try to replace the current leader of the international system, the hegemon, can be understood by the qualities of nation-states and by the inherent tendency of hegemons to decline. A nation-state, Gilpin says, has a tendency to expand until its marginal costs will equal its marginal revenues. Incentives to expand can come from the international system, where a hegemon may be in decline, as well as from domestic pressure. A state will try to change the configuration of the system, as soon as it estimates that it is profitable to do so<sup>58</sup>. The succession of hegemons can be explained by the fact that for a hegemon the costs of maintaining the status quo rise at a faster speed than its revenues<sup>59</sup>. This is due to the fact that a hegemonic power has to make non-productive investments to keep international order, for instance to maintain huge military forces, or to finance foreign aid<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Stephen Krasner, Defending the National Interest. Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1979, pp. 167-170; Robert Keohane, After Hegemony. Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984, p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> Gilpin, 'The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism', p. 301.

<sup>57</sup> Tucker, The Inequality of Nations, p. 117.

<sup>58</sup> Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, pp. 85-107.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. The analysis of imperial overstretch by Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000, Fontana Press London, 1989 (1988).

<sup>60</sup> Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, pp. 156-157.



Although the pace of the decline can be slowed down by technological innovation, its decline will inevitably come<sup>61</sup>.

Stephen Krasner explicitly aims at the restoration of the notion of national interest in order to explain the behaviour of nation-states in international politics. In doing so, he argues against Marxism, because this approach considers foreign economic expansion to be a state necessity<sup>62</sup>, as well as against liberal theory that conceives of foreign policy as a resultant of effective access of various interests to the political arena. While both Marxism and liberalism have tended to explain American foreign policy as a passive reaction to external forces<sup>63</sup>, Krasner contends that the national interest is formulated by the nation-state, and constitutes a value that remains independent of domestic pressures.

Robert Keohane, finally, argues that cooperation in a relatively anarchical system in which a hegemon is absent, can be understood in terms of the self-interest of states to engage in mutual cooperation through international institutions, either in the formal arrangement of international organizations, or in the informal structure of international regimes<sup>64</sup>.

2. International political system. Some of the most popular explanations of international politics point to the constraining influence of the structure of the international political system on the parts within that system<sup>65</sup>. Although the system's level has been a traditional concern of analysts of world politics<sup>66</sup>, the issue has received renewed attention since Kenneth Waltz did away with many a theory of the international system, by showing that most of them were essentially reductionist in the sense that international processes were actually explained by

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<sup>61</sup> Gilpin, *ibid.*, pp. 168-185.

<sup>62</sup> Cammack argues that Krasner does not succeed in proving that his analysis is superior to a Marxist one; Cammack, 'Bringing the State Back In?', *British Journal of Political Science*, (19), 2, 1989, pp. 269-274.

<sup>63</sup> Krasner, *Defending the National Interest*, pp. 26, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, *passim*.

<sup>65</sup> Even a prudent author such as Arend Lijphart introduces this idea of structural causality when he argues that 'the struggle for power into which states are forced by the security dilemma tends to lead to an overall equilibrium among them instead of inevitable conflict', Lijphart, 'Structure of Theoretical Revolution', p. 235.

<sup>66</sup> Gabriel Almond persuasively argues that most scholars of international and comparative politics have tended to neglect the rich tradition in the social sciences that tries to establish the precise relationship between national and international factors determining political behaviour; Gabriel A. Almond, 'The International-National Connection', *British Journal of Political Science*, (19), 2, 1989, pp. 237-259.

variables at the level of nation states and not at the level of the system as a truly systemic theory would require<sup>67</sup>.

Some neorealist authors have taken up this challenge, and tried to develop theories that would fill the lacuna, by starting from the structure of the international political system as the most important factor in explaining international politics<sup>68</sup>. George Modelski and Kenneth Waltz explicitly stress the influence of the anarchical character of international relations, and claim that it is the most important factor in accounting for the behaviour of states.

For Kenneth Waltz, the structure of the international political system disposes its units, the nation-states, to behave in certain ways, and not in others, and because they do so, the system is maintained. Two elements of this structure are constant: first, world politics is anarchy where states strive at least for self-preservation; second, its units perform similar functions because they face the same tasks<sup>69</sup>. This type of analysis suggests a structural-functionalist framework. A third element of structure, the distribution of capabilities, varies over time across units, and from system to system. This element, the distribution of power is important because changes in this distribution will change the configuration within the system and will thus change the units' expected behaviour as well as the outcome of their interactions<sup>70</sup>.

For George Modelski the absence of a strong central authority in international relations produces an incentive to the units in the system to create global order. A vacancy in leadership generates competition and challenge. Modelski goes even as far as claiming that the presence of leadership will make the system non-anarchic<sup>71</sup>. Modelski contends that it is possible to

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<sup>67</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, 'Theory of International Relations', in Fred Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (eds.), The Handbook of Political Science, Addison Wesley, Reading, 1975; Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, chapter 2.

<sup>68</sup> It should be borne in mind, however, that many neorealists refer to the context of the international system; for Krasner the achievement of a more equal distribution in the world is severely limited by the influence of international anarchy, Krasner, Defending the National Interest, pp.167-170. Keohane also remarks that international regimes can only be understood in the context of an anarchical self-help system, Keohane, After Hegemony, p. 62. Similarly, Robert Tucker gives priority to the nature of the international system over the characteristics of nation-states in accounting for processes of international distribution, Tucker, The Inequality of Nations, p. 168. Likewise, Robert Gilpin, when he discusses change in world politics, observes that 'the structure of the international system itself greatly affects the capacity and willingness of a group or state to try to challenge the system', Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, p. 85.

<sup>69</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 58, 98.

<sup>70</sup> Waltz, ibid., p. 97.

<sup>71</sup> George Modelski, Long Cycles in World Politics, pp. 9-18.

explain political history since 1500 as a sequence of cycles in each of which one world power has been succeeded by another: 'the prominent role of a world power attracts competitors...and its pre-eminent, if largely customary..., authority begins to wear out; the system moves into multipolarity. Rivalries among the major powers grow fiercer and assume the characteristics of oligopolistic competition'<sup>72</sup>. As such, the global system went through four full circles with Portugal, the Netherlands, Great Britain (twice), and the United States as world powers creating and maintaining world order<sup>73</sup>. Modelski and Waltz can be said to be the main neorealist writers who look predominantly at the nature of the international system in order explain behaviour<sup>74</sup>.

### 2.3.3 Methods to get to know that reality

The rather explicit adherence to deductive falsificationism makes neorealism qualitatively different from traditional realism. Even those authors who base their analyses on a huge set of data on international conflict, such as George Modelski and his disciples, and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, use these data to test hypotheses that are deduced from theoretical axioms. George Modelski argues that the absence of a strong central authority provokes the urge for nation-states in the international system to try to impose some degree of order. A hegemon is a substitute for a strong central authority. It follows that if the relative power of the hegemon, the leader, starts declining, disorder may be its consequence, and new states will try take the hegemon's place, which is often accomplished only after a period of violence<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>72</sup> George Modelski, 'The Long Cycle of Global Politics and the Nation-State', p. 217.

<sup>73</sup> Modelski, Long Cycles in World Politics, pp. 39-50; 'The Long Cycle of Global Politics', pp. 218-224.

<sup>74</sup> Although he is not considered to be a neorealist, Immanuel Wallerstein is reasoning in a way analogue to Waltz, when he explains the characteristics and the behaviour of nation-states by referring to their structural position in the capitalist world economy; Immanuel Wallerstein, 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis', in Immanuel Wallerstein, The Capitalist World Economy. Studies in Modern Capitalism, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 1-36. It is true that for Waltz the basic cause lies in the security dilemma of states, whereas for Wallerstein the root of world politics lies in the nature of the capitalist world economy; however, both authors approach international relations in a similar way, because both stress that (a) political behaviour is constrained by the system's structure, and (b) the dynamics of world politics is determined by economic capabilities and their fluctuation. This similarity is appreciated by Robert Gilpin, (with the assistance of Jean M. Gilpin) The Political Economy of International Relations, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1987, pp. 67-72. This is overlooked by Wendt who separates 'Neorealists' from 'World-system theorists' in their treatment of the international system; Alexander Wendt, 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory', International Organization, (41), 3, 1987, pp. 335-336.

<sup>75</sup> Modelski, 'The long Cycle of Global Politics', pp. 218-225.

Similarly, Robert Gilpin claims that the anarchical character of the international system provides a set of constraints and opportunities for nation-states to pursue their interests. Because nation-states are assumed to respond to opportunities to expand, states will wage an attempt to change the configuration of the system when they estimate it profitable. In choosing that moment they are helped by the inherent characteristic of hegemonic states to decline because their marginal costs to maintain the status quo will inevitably start exceeding its revenues. Challengers of the status quo will expand until the moment at which their marginal costs will equal their marginal revenues<sup>76</sup>.

Whereas Gilpin sets out to explain the recurrence of large-scale wars between great powers, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita attempts at formalizing parts of Gilpin's argument and at formulating a general theory to explain why and when wars start. Bueno de Mesquita claims that an actor's expectation to gain from initiating a war (not necessarily the expectation to win a war) explains the occurrence of armed conflict. His axiomatic, deductive approach was tested with a large data set on international conflict, which confirmed his hypotheses; moreover, it was found that wars thus initiated, are usually won by the actor with a net gain expectancy<sup>77</sup>.

Kenneth Waltz provides an axiomatic, deductive account of how the nature of the international political system constrains the behaviour of nation-states. Because there is no central authority in world politics, nation-states have to look after themselves if they want to survive, and this makes them effectively contribute to counterbalance the power of the strongest state, no matter what their individual motives are, that is, whether or not they seek domination, or deliberately try to achieve a balance<sup>78</sup>. In systems that are not structured by the principle of self-help, where security is thus not the highest good, different forms of

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<sup>76</sup> Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, pp. 28-38, 84-107, 186-187.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, The War Trap, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1981; Bueno de Mesquita refined his model in 'The War Trap Revisited', American Political Science Review, (79), 1, 1985, pp. 157-176; Patrick James's recent study gives an assessment of Bueno de Mesquita's approach as well as a confirmation of its conclusions, Patrick James, Crisis and War, McGill Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1988; Nicolson's study, however, produces a refutation of the original model, Michael Nicholson, 'The Conceptual Bases of "The War Trap"', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (31), 2, 1987, pp. 346-369.

<sup>78</sup> Were they not to do so, then structure would catch up with them, as it were, and they would 'fare badly', Waltz, 'Reflections on "Theory of International Politics": A Response to my Critics', in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), Neorealism and its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986, p. 331.

behaviour can be expected, such as bandwagoning, that is, the joining of the strongest party rather than counterbalancing it<sup>79</sup>.

Some neorealists explicitly defend deductive falsificationism as the correct way to formulate and test theories of international relations. It is therefore not surprising that three criteria for the judgment of the soundness of theories are presented: (1) Axiomatic consistency: before one can even think of testing one's hypothesis one must ascertain the logical consistency of one's theory. In order to make this open to anyone, formal explicit reasoning is to be preferred, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita argues. He considers axiomatic consistency to be the only objective criterion available<sup>80</sup>. (2) Critical Testing: after having established the internal logic of a theory, one should infer hypotheses from it and put them to a number of distinct and demanding tests in order to open up the theory to falsification<sup>81</sup>. (3) Prediction: although rarely any social science theory is tested for its ability to forecast future events, eventually one expects such a theory to do so, if only to avoid the suspicion that 'the theory was made to fit the data' or that the theory was no more than a tautology<sup>82</sup>. George Modelski insists that his explanation of world politics since the Late Middle Ages can be projected into the future<sup>83</sup>.

We can therefore safely conclude that neorealist writers, on the whole, perceive international relations as a pattern of regularity, namely anarchy, which forces nation-states to strive first and for all for their own survival in that system. Causes of patterns of regular behaviour in such an environment can be found in the characteristics of nation-states as well as in the nature of the international system. It is for the purpose of this thesis very important to notice that none of these neorealists is trying to explain international politics by referring to the behaviour of individuals. Individuals appear neither as a 'constituent factor' of regularity

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<sup>79</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 116-126. Waltz's theory has been tested and confirmed for patterns of alliance formation in the Middle East by Stephen M. Walt, Origins of Alliances.

<sup>80</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, 'Toward a Scientific Understanding of International Conflict. A Personal View', International Studies Quarterly, (29), 1985, pp. 128-129; 'The Contribution of Expected Utility Theory to the Study of International Conflict', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, (18), 4, 1988, p. 633; For a critical view of axiomatic deduction as a valid criterion, Robert D. Spegele, 'Deconstructing Methodological Falsificationism in International Relations', American Political Science Review, (74), 1980, pp. 104-122.

<sup>81</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 14-16; 116-117.

<sup>82</sup> Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, 'The Contribution of Expected Utility Theory', p. 649.

<sup>83</sup> Modelski, Long Cycles in World Politics, pp. 39-40. He actually predicts a new global war for around the year 2030.

(which could have been hypothesized in their aggressive, or power-seeking, nature), nor as a central unit of analysis, a role that is strictly reserved for the nation-state<sup>84</sup>. Moreover, in their epistemology, neorealists tend to rely on deductive falsificationism rather than inductive enumeratism. In sum, neorealists seem to have entered the positivist realm of analysis. It still has to be ascertained, however, whether in this way they will be able to preserve traditional realist notions of international relations and to explain world politics in a more satisfactory way.

#### 2.4 Neorealism as the saver of traditional realism

To what extent do neorealism's epistemological and ontological notions actually offer a restoration of the shaky foundations of the realist tradition within the study of international relations? Actually, neorealism has been able to do away with some of the criticisms that have been brought against traditional realism throughout the years. In the 1970s, in the aftermath of the Vietnam-war and the 1973 oil crisis, scholars became worried about the impossibility to explain these phenomena with realist tools. Several fundamental flaws in the realist approach were indicated:

First, realism was paying attention to situations of military conflict only, and thus could not deal with the impact of O.P.E.C. in 1973, nor with increasing cooperation between states. Second, by consequence, realism, putting all its money on the high politics of war, ignored that international economic processes could be as essential. Third, by concentrating on the nation-state, realism could not account for the role of transnational actors, like multinationals and international organizations. Fourth, realism seemed rather limited in arguing that power is the basic motive behind states' behavior in world politics<sup>85</sup>.

As a matter of fact, neorealism (1) re-establishes the central place of anarchy as an explanatory factor of international politics, (2) manages to incorporate global economic processes into its domain, and (3) restores the central role of national states as actors on the

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<sup>84</sup> Krasner quite explicitly states that a (neo)realist account of Third World pressure on the First World to concede them more favourable international regimes should not put emphasis on the beliefs and attitudes of policy makers, as they can only be significant within the structural constraints imposed by the balance-of-power. One should therefore analyze the final policy decisions of states and not policy makers' beliefs or attitudes; Krasner, Structural Conflict, p. 306.

<sup>85</sup> James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr, Contending Theories of International Relations, pp. 124-127. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Power and Interdependence, pp. 23-37.

stage of world politics. All three achievements are strongly interrelated, and their strength originates in the adoption of deductive falsificationism.

### 1. The central place of anarchy

Traditionally, criticism of the realist conception of international relations as Hobbesian state of nature in which conflict would prevail, is based on contending the empirical validity of such an assumption. It found its most articulate spokesman in Hedley Bull<sup>86</sup>, who basically claimed, first, that it was conceptually wrong to think of anarchy as a situation of disorder<sup>87</sup> in which war would eventually be inevitable, and second, that in the real world the elements that would characterize world politics as such a state of nature were simply absent<sup>88</sup>:

First, even though history seems to confirm that states are always preparing for war, this does not point to permanent disorder. For Bull, the occasional occurrence of war illustrates that international law and balance-of-power politics do function as well as limitations of military conflict. A rudimentary form of international society therefore exists as opposed to complete anarchy. Furthermore, it is not true that no moral rules can be formulated and obeyed in world politics. Bull points out that traditions of positive law and morality have been a continuous feature of international political life. Moreover, a whole variety of international organizations exists which can be considered devices for the promotion of compliance with established norms<sup>89</sup>.

Although Bull's observations may be correct, he is not challenging a theory here, but merely calling into question a description, or a set of regularities, supposedly derived from Hobbesian assumptions about the state of nature<sup>90</sup>. This point has been taken up explicitly by those neorealists, such as Waltz, Bueno de Mesquita, and, to a certain extent, Gilpin, who

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<sup>86</sup> Hedley Bull, 'Society and Anarchy in International Relations', in Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds.), Diplomatic Investigations. Essays in the Theory of International Politics, Allen and Unwin, London, 196, pp. 35-50; Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Order; Hedley Bull, 'Hobbes and the International Anarchy', Social Research, (48), 4, 1981, pp. 717-738.

<sup>87</sup> Bull, 'Society and Anarchy', p. 35, esp. footnote 2. James Richardson, 'The Academic Study of International Relations', Unpublished manuscript, pp. 51-52.

<sup>88</sup> Recent interpretations by Bull and R.J. Vincent, however, place Hobbes's idea of a state of nature in the context of international society rather than anarchy, see Walker, 'Realism, Change and International Political Theory', p. 73.

<sup>89</sup> Bull, 'Society and Anarchy', pp. 41-42; cf. Charles R. Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations, pp. 46-48.

<sup>90</sup> I owe this point to Michael W. Doyle.

claim to set forth a deductively formulated theory of international politics. They emphasize that it is illegitimate to test a theory by examining the empirical validity of its assumptions. For Waltz 'a theory contains at least one theoretical assumption. Such assumptions are not factual. One therefore cannot legitimately ask if they are true, only if they are useful. Theories must be evaluated in terms of what they claim to explain'<sup>91</sup>. Although some claim that the untouchability of assumptions will necessarily lead to the impossibility to challenge a theory on its empirical claims either<sup>92</sup>, it will be shown in section 2.5 that neorealist theory can be criticized for its limited explanatory power. What matters here is the question whether the neorealist conception of anarchy provides a basis for the explanation of international politics.

What is nowadays explicitly accepted in neorealist writings is the view that anarchy, or the absence of central authority, and the implied security dilemma, no longer exclusively mean the perpetual preparation of war<sup>93</sup>, but that anarchy need not exclude cooperation between sovereign actors<sup>94</sup>. Underneath, however, a shift in the nature of the dynamics of international politics can be observed: power is no longer conceived as the driving force underlying all international politics, but is incorporated in the main feature of actors within an anarchical system, namely, that they will strive for security rather than for power itself. This means that not just competition can be an outcome, but cooperation too<sup>95</sup>.

This is borne out in Waltz's theory of inter-state behaviour: a balance-of-power system will reduce the likelihood of military conflict, whether states strive for power, or barely seek survival, but, as a matter of fact, in such a system states will have to assure their security first,

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<sup>91</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 117-118.

<sup>92</sup> Weltman claims that 'empirical investigation merely confirms the implications of the premises under which it was undertaken. It can never be more conclusive than those premises themselves'; John J. Weltman, 'On the Interpretation of International Thought', Review of Politics, (44), 1, 1982, p. 29. This would imply that only immanent logic and formal deduction can be relevant criteria in appraising a theory, as is maintained by, for instance, Bueno de Mesquita, 'Towards a Scientific Understanding of International Conflict'.

<sup>93</sup> Herbert Butterfield phrased the situation on which mutual mistrust is the main feature of international politics as 'Hobbesian fear', Herbert Butterfield, History and Human Relations, Collins, London, 1951, p. 19. Goldman observes that realists have too long equated anarchy with war and conflict, Kjell Goldmann, 'The concept of realism as a source of confusion', Cooperation and Conflict, (23), 1, 1988, p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. R.J. Vincent, 'Hedley Bull and Order in International Politics', Millennium. Journal of International Studies, (17), 2, 1988, pp. 195-214; Richard K. Ashley, 'Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique', Millennium. Journal of International Studies, (17), 2, 1988, p. 239.

<sup>95</sup> Goldmann refers to this shift, when he observes that security will incite nation-states to be satisfiers rather than maximizers for power, 'The concept of "realism" as a source of confusion', p. 8.



before they can even think of pursuing other goals, such as 'tranquility, profit, and power'<sup>96</sup>. Security thus becomes a central element of the dynamics of the anarchical system as important as power: not only does it cover the traditional theme of conflict between nation-states, as in Waltz's work, but it also allows for the analysis of a whole new field of international processes, because anarchy no longer excludes cooperation among nation-states as a way of attaining the aim of security<sup>97</sup>. This is most clearly shown in the study of international institutions which hosts two related approaches, the study of international regimes and the application of game theory to the study of international politics<sup>98</sup>.

(a) International regimes theory. International regimes are usually broadly defined to refer to 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations'<sup>99</sup>. In such a conception both formal international organizations, international conventions, international law, and less formal arrangements, such as morality, or public opinion, could be considered regimes. In practice, however, most studies of international regimes focus on formal arrangements between nation-states<sup>100</sup>. This limitation is explained by the fact that rules and norms, the core of a regime, are imbedded in practices, the most important of which still is the sovereignty of nation-states<sup>101</sup>. Nevertheless, by providing information and stabilizing expectations of nation-states, international regimes reduce uncertainty between them and lower transaction costs. It is significant that many regime studies are framed in neorealist

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<sup>96</sup> Waltz, 'Theory of International Politics, p. 127; 'Reflections on "Theory of International Politics". A Response to My Critics', in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), Neorealism and Its Critics, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 334.

<sup>97</sup> This is most explicit in Keohane, who seeks 'to demonstrate that realist assumptions about world politics are consistent with the formation of institutional arrangements, containing rules and principles, which promote cooperation', After Hegemony, p. 67.

<sup>98</sup> Keohane argues that neorealism ignores international institutions; Robert O. Keohane, 'Alliances, Threats and the Uses of Neorealism', International Security, (13), 1, 1988, p. 174. The point is rather that many studies of international institutions, such as international regimes and game theory, effectively follow neorealist prescriptions.

<sup>99</sup> Stephen Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Variables: Regimes as Intervening Variables', International Organization, (36), 2, 1982, p. 186.

<sup>100</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., '"Power and Interdependence" Revisited', International Organization, (41), 4, 1985, pp. 740-741.

<sup>101</sup> Robert O. Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches', International Studies Quarterly, (32), 1988, p. 386.

terms: nation-states, caught in the security dilemma of an anarchical environment are prepared to engage into cooperation with other states through international institutions like international regimes. Exactly because of international anarchy and the subsequent autonomy of the nation-state transaction costs are never negligible, 'since it is always difficult to communicate, to monitor performance, and especially to enforce compliance with rules'<sup>102</sup>. International regimes provide these elements, and thus seriously reduce the pressure from the security dilemma<sup>103</sup>. As such, international regimes are beneficial to smaller powers, which consider them barriers to arbitrariness by stronger powers, as well as for great powers, that want to establish a stable environment, to which regimes undeniably seem to contribute<sup>104</sup>. It is ironical that the study of international regimes, that started out as an element of interdependence theory, which itself was highly critical of the realist tradition, has facilitated the coming of neorealist literature over the years, as the authors of Power and Interdependence themselves observe<sup>105</sup>. Nevertheless, it can be concluded<sup>106</sup> that international regime theory, which analyzes world politics with neorealist tools, is an improvement of the old realist

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<sup>102</sup> Keohane, ibid., pp. 386-387.

<sup>103</sup> See, for instance, J.A. Finlayson and M.W. Zacher, 'The Gatt and the Regulation of Trade Barriers: Regime Dynamics and Functions', in Stephen Krasner (ed.), International Regimes, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1983, pp. 273-315; Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony, chapter 10; V.K. Aggarwal, Liberal Protectionism: The International Politics of Organized Textile Trade, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985; C. Lipson, 'Bankers' Dilemmas: Cooperation and Rescheduling Sovereign Debts', in K. Oye (ed.), Cooperation under Anarchy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986, pp. 200-225.

<sup>104</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., 'Two Cheers for Multilateralism', Foreign Policy, (60), 1985, p. 152.

<sup>105</sup> Keohane and Nye, '"Power and Interdependence" Revisited', p. 733.

<sup>106</sup> Joseph Grieco argues that this incorporation of cooperation does not properly reflect the importance and value of a realist conception of anarchy. According to him, nation-states are moved not just by a concern over defection from cooperation, which option is supposed to make international regimes less attractive to states; such an emphasis would rely too much on the maximization of power by nation-states. Because of their concern over security, states, the realist argument goes, act upon the relative gains by others as well. Grieco forgets, however, that exactly the exigencies of the security dilemma can incite a state to engage in cooperation, precisely because it reduces uncertainty in some areas of world politics - if only temporarily; Joseph M. Grieco, 'Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism', International Organization, (42), 3, 1988, pp. 487, 497-503; see also, Joseph M. Grieco, Cooperation among Nations. Europe, America, and Non-Tariff Barriers to Trade, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1990, pp. 27-50. This implies, according to me, that Keohane in After Hegemony does refer to the prime dynamics of world politics, i.e., the security dilemma, which allows regimes to be formed; contrary to what Rosenau claims in his critique of Keohane's book, James N. Rosenau, 'Before Cooperation: Hegemons, Regimes, and Habit-driven Actors in World Politics', International Organization, (40), 4, 1986, p. 874.

view of anarchical conflict, because it allows for cooperation to take place. Another approach that opens up this possibility is game theory.

(b) Game theory analysis. A number of recent writings explicitly deals with the question of how nation-states will ever be prepared to cooperate under the conditions of the security dilemma, the traditional interpretation of which stated that no state can improve its security without reducing that of others. Apart from the school of regime analysis, several works have appeared of late that, in order to investigate the possibility of cooperation under anarchy, present their analysis in a formalized fashion<sup>107</sup>. It is fashionable to frame the research problem in terms of the iterated Prisoners' Dilemma Game, under which conditions nation-states will prefer to defect from cooperation no matter what the other party does. It is suggested that a solution for this situation can be found, if nation-states adopt a Tit-for-Tat strategy, that is, sticking to one's promises as long as others do so too<sup>108</sup>.

What is important here, is the observation that those scholars who try to apply insights from game theory to the study of international relations build their work on the central notion of traditional realism, that is, international anarchy and the consecutive security dilemma. However, their reliance on game theory permits them to allow for both conflict and cooperation to take place<sup>109</sup>. Furthermore, they tend to concentrate on the pay-offs or nation-states, who thus remain the central actors of the game. Interestingly, game theory is linked to regime studies in as far as international institutions can provide the organizational setting in which Tit-for-Tat strategies can be furthered<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>107</sup> The main works in the field are: Kenneth Oye (ed.), Cooperation under Anarchy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986; Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, Basic Books, New York, 1984; Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation under the Security Dilemma', World Politics, (30), 1978, pp. 167-214; Robert Keohane, After Hegemony, esp. Chapter 5; John C. Harsanyi, 'Game Theory and the Analysis of International Conflict', in Harsanyi, Essays on Ethics, Social Behavior, and Scientific Explanation, Reidel, Dordrecht, 1976, pp. 145-161; James D. Morrow, 'Social Choice and System Structure in World Politics', World Politics, (41), 1, 1988, esp. pp. 95-96. Recent studies include John A.C. Conybeare, Trade Wars: The Theory and Practice of International Commercial Rivalry, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987; David A. Lake, Power, Protection, and Free Trade: International Sources of U.S. Commercial Strategy, 1887-1939, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1988.

<sup>108</sup> Robert Jervis, 'Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation', World Politics, (40), 3, 1988, pp. 317-318; Joanne Gowa, 'Anarchy, Egoism, and Third Image: "The Evolution of Cooperation" and International Relations', International Organization, (40), 1, 1986, pp. 168-171.

<sup>109</sup> Jervis, 'Realism, Game Theory and Cooperation', p. 319.

<sup>110</sup> Grieco, 'Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation', pp. 493-495.

Neorealism has thus come a long way in overcoming the criticism against traditional realism that its myopic view of an anarchical environment limited its research focus to military conflict. By keeping anarchy as the analytical point of departure, but allowing for cooperation between nation-states by embracing international regimes and game theory, neorealism opens the way to respond to a second objection to classical realism, that is, its lack of attention for economic processes.

## 2. The incorporation of global economic processes

From the acceptance of cooperation under the structural condition of international anarchy it is only one step further to the recognition that neorealism thus has left behind its traditionally exclusive emphasis on military issues, the domain of 'high politics', and has opened up to analyses of international economic processes. In fact, many of the empirical studies that rely on international regime theory and game theoretical analysis deal with case studies from the field of international economics. Traditionally, however, realists have been reproached for their negligence of other spheres than the politico-military one<sup>111</sup>. With their serious attention to economic areas, neorealists, when discussing international regimes, get very close to Keohane and Nye's original conception of interdependence, which they meant to be a redefinition of the concept of power in international relations, by breaking it up in various domains and dimensions<sup>112</sup>. For some commentators this feature of encompassing international economics within the field even constitutes the main characteristic of

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<sup>111</sup> Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Power and Interdependence, p. 24; Mansbach and Vasquez, In Search of Theory, pp. 10-11: for a defence of the primacy of power politics over economics, see Martin Wight, Power Politics, pp. 102-103.

<sup>112</sup> Keohane and Nye tried to refine the idea of mutual dependence as a source of power in world politics by distinguishing between symmetrical and asymmetrical interdependence. The latter indicated that states, although dependent on each other, could be dependent in an unequal way, varying with the nature of the area of dependence. This could provide one state with a source of influence, and, eventually, power over another state; Keohane and Nye, Power and Interdependence, pp. 8-19. This intention has recently been confirmed by the authors, who acknowledge how close they have thus remained to the realist tradition themselves, and, as a matter of fact, contributed to the broadening of the basis of neorealism, because no-one picked up their call for an alternative framework, called "complex interdependence", for which they had given the main outlines; Keohane and Nye, "'Power and Interdependence" Revisited', pp. 727, 733. It is therefore incorrect of Kenneth Waltz to state that interdependence usually suggests little more than that everything affects everything else; Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 156-157. It is true that interdependence has become a catchy song that sometimes plays the tune that Waltz repudiates; one such example is Charles Beitz's erroneous claim that international distributive justice can be based on Rawlsian principles of domestic justice, just because the world is interdependent; Beitz, Political Theory and International Relations, Part III.

neorealism<sup>113</sup>. The clearest example of the incorporation of global economic processes in realist thought is Gilpin's recent study of the interaction between international politics and international economics<sup>114</sup>. In his analysis he puts emphasis on the influence of the international system, and, as Roger Tooze shows, develops an argument along the line of positivist epistemology<sup>115</sup>. And indeed, as Gilpin is interested in the political economy of international relations rather than in the political economy of the world system he remains perfectly within a realist analysis which stresses the interaction between national states<sup>116</sup>. In this way both criticisms that realism could not deal with global interdependence nor with other tools than military behaviour are done away with. By arguing that nation-states are still dominant actors rather than transnational actors, neorealists incorporate the importance of power within global economic interdependence: interdependence simply means different types of conflict, fought with various type of power, not just military<sup>117</sup>. Susan Strange points to this aspect, when she observes that instead of competing for territory states now engage increasingly in a competition for market shares, which requires less expenses for military security<sup>118</sup>. This observation indicates another reason why neorealists have turned to international economics: conflict between states is more and more of an economic kind, rather than politico-military<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> See, for example, R.J. Vincent, 'Hedley Bull and Order in International Politics', p. 204.

<sup>114</sup> Robert Gilpin, The Political Economy of International Relations.

<sup>115</sup> Roger Tooze, 'The Emergence of a New International Political Economy: a Realist View', Millennium. Journal of International Studies, (16), 3, 1988, pp. 523, 525.

<sup>116</sup> Susan Strange, 'Defending Benign Mercantillism', Journal of Peace Research, (25), 3, 1988, p. 273.

<sup>117</sup> Tucker, The inequality of nations, pp. 80-81.

<sup>118</sup> Susan Strange, 'The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony', International Organization, (41), 4, 1987, pp. 551-574.

<sup>119</sup> This change may be complementary to Michael Doyle's explanation of relative peace between liberal democracies for more than two centuries. He attributes this absence of armed conflict to the increasing acceptance of Kant's three principles of perpetual peace by these states; Michael W. Doyle, 'Kant, Liberalism and Foreign Affairs. Parts 1, 2', Philosophy and Public Affairs, (12), 3/4, 1983, pp. 205-235, 323-353; Doyle, 'Liberalism and World Politics', American Political Science Review, (80), 4, 1986, pp. 1151-1170, which article essentially claims that a competition for markets is possible without a resort to force.

### 3. The restoration of the nation-state as principal actor

It has since long been stated that the traditional realist emphasis on the state as a central actor is a serious misconception, either because states are not the only significant actors on the international scene, or because states are not the unitary actors they were often held to be: the recent swing to studies that hold cooperation under anarchy to be possible reintroduce the emphasis on nation-states as principal actors, and even the notion that states rationally try to pursue an interest of their own<sup>120</sup>. It has been shown in section 2.3 that this can be explained by neorealism's epistemological view that assumptions that underlie theories, such as the rationally acting state, need not be true, only be useful. Most studies within the framework of international regimes deal with formal inter-state relations<sup>121</sup>, or with institutions and norms as the outcome of rationally calculated behaviour of states<sup>122</sup>.

The reemergence of the centrality of national states is closely linked to the reinterpretation of international cooperation to be fitting within the framing of interdependence as an analytical tool of (neo)realism. Neorealism, as a matter of fact, assumes transnational actors to be irrelevant for the main events of international relations. Even if military power has become less important relative to economic power, it is through the nation-state that the old game will be played: 'interdependence simply means new kinds of conflicts, the solution of which still depends on the state as the "formative state of consensus"'<sup>123</sup>. Gilpin asserts that national states are still crucial actors in world politics regardless of their mutual dependency: '[d]espite the emergence of the multinational corporation and international finance are still nationally based and, despite the increase in economic interdependence, few economies are tightly integrated into the world economy (-) Interdependence is a phenomenon to be studied, not a ready-made set of conclusions regarding the nature and dynamics of international relations'<sup>124</sup>. The message is, therefore, clear: in international political economy and international relations alike, nation-states are to stay in the spotlight<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Ashley, 'Untying the Sovereign State', p. 236.

<sup>121</sup> Keohane and Nye, '"Power and Interdependence" Revisited', pp. 740-741.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Kratochwil and Ruggie, 'International Organization: a State of the Art of an Art of the State', International Organization, (40), 4, 1986, pp. 762-763.

<sup>123</sup> Tucker, The Inequality of Nations, pp. 80-102, quote from pp. 80-81.

<sup>124</sup> Gilpin, The Political Economy of International Relations, pp. 16, 18.

<sup>125</sup> This is especially true for recent studies of international trade. For an overview, see Benjamin J. Cohen, 'The Political Economy of International Trade', International Organization, (44), 2, Spring 1990, pp. 261-281.

The conclusion must be that neorealist scholars have succeeded in giving realist notions a more rigorous, that is, scientific, foundation. Their explicit reference to theory formation and the application of deductive logic to support their claims certainly brings the discipline of international relations at a higher intellectual level, leaving behind the empiricist part of the discipline, where as many data as possible were collected and made subject to analyses of their correlations. Neorealist authors have thus brought some basic notions of the field within what Thomas Kuhn calls the context of justification<sup>126</sup>. In doing so, neorealism has formulated a response to critics of traditional realism: it broadened the assumption of anarchy to mean security rather than mistrust, thus allowing for cooperation to take place, which opens the way for the incorporation of international economic processes. It thus made the distinction between 'high' and 'low' politics less dramatic. Furthermore, it provides for a reinterpretation of the concept of interdependence which privileges the position of the nation-state and for a redefinition of power in international relations, which retains its central role.

## 2.5 The explanatory power of neorealism

From these premises neorealists have set out to deal with those issues that at one time were indicators of traditional realists' lack of explanatory power: predominantly, of course, this involves attention to issues of international political economy, but security problems as well. The latest step is the suggestion that American involvement in Vietnam can be explained in neorealist terms<sup>127</sup>, while the Vietnam has been the phenomenon par excellence that realism could not deal with <sup>128</sup>.

It should be stressed that the strength of neorealist works comes predominantly from their ontological and epistemological coherence. No emphasis on anarchy, nation-states, their utility maximizing behaviour, etc., would be possible, had all this not been grounded in an epistemology of deductive reasoning that stresses axioms and assumptions, thus relieving neorealism from proving that nation-states are, or behave as if they were, rational actors, or that international relations do indeed resemble an anarchy. Assumptions are just useful tools

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. R.H. Lieshout, 'De "Harde" Kern van de Zaak', Acta Politica, (24), 4, 1989, pp. 461-482.

<sup>127</sup> David L. Anderson, 'Why Vietnam ? Postrevisionist Answers and a Neorealist Suggestion', Diplomatic History, (13), 3, 1989, esp. pp. 427-429.

<sup>128</sup> Mansbach and Vasquez, In Search of Theory, chapter 1.

to approach reality<sup>129</sup>. It is therefore not enough to reproach Waltz for not having formulated a theory of the state<sup>130</sup>, or for not stipulating the origins of a state's interests<sup>131</sup>. States are assumed to be there and to be motivated by survival, an interest that follows from the security dilemma. Other interests can be pursued, but are not necessary for theory formation. One should only ask whether these restrictions in assumptions allow neorealists to explain what they seek to explain. It follows from this that in order to criticize neorealists it is not enough to merely point out their unreal assumptions. Neorealists should be judged in terms of what they seek to explain<sup>132</sup>. Only if important areas remain unexplained, it will be useful to ask whether alternative modes of explanation offer complementary insight without touching the neorealist core argument, or whether they offer a complete and better understanding of phenomena. Only in this way can it be ascertained whether neorealism's unrealistic assumptions actually hamper the understanding of international politics. Let us therefore now turn to the question whether neorealist theories succeed in explaining the phenomena they seek to explain.

Waltz's theory of balance of power, in which states will act to counter the growing power of another actor, is simple<sup>133</sup>, clear, and seems to follow deductively from its premises<sup>134</sup>. Its strength, however, carries its weakness at the same time. It offers an explanation of under what conditions military conflicts are more likely to occur, that is, in a system of multipolarity rather than in bipolar one. But that is about all it can be expected to

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<sup>129</sup> Waltz observes that 'we can freely admit that states are in fact not unitary, purposive actors. States pursue many goals, which are often vaguely formulated and inconsistent (-). But all of this has always been known, and it tells us nothing about the merits of balance-of-power theory', Theory of International Politics, p. 119.

<sup>130</sup> E.g., Wendt, 'The agent-structure problem', pp. 342-343.

<sup>131</sup> Keohane and Nye, '"Power and Interdependence" Revisited', pp. 745 ff.; Jervis makes the same reproach to game theory, Jervis, 'Realism, Game Theory, and Cooperation', p. 322.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, p. 118.

<sup>133</sup> Robert Cox questions the relevance of parsimony as a criterion to judge competing theories, 'Postscript 1985' to his 'Social forces, states and world orders: beyond international relations theory', in Robert O. Keohane, Neorealism and its critics, p. 245. Nye thinks Waltz has sacrificed too much in order to attain parsimony, 'Neorealism and Neoliberalism', p. 243; Waltz offers no explicit defence of parsimony as a central value, but nevertheless emphasizes the elegance of his approach, 'Reflections on "Theory of International Politics"', p. 330.

<sup>134</sup> The clearest statement of this deductive logic can be found in Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, (18), 4, 1988, pp. 619-620.



say. In Waltz's words: 'although neorealist theory does not explain why particular wars are fought, it does explain war's dismal recurrence through the millennia'<sup>135</sup>.

One should first wonder if one should be satisfied with a theory that offers such general explanations; what is more, it should be doubted whether the probability of the recurrence of military conflict follows directly from Waltz's hard logic. According to me, there is no compelling reason why the security dilemma of states that strive for survival causes multipolar systems to be relatively more unstable than bipolar ones. The reasons that Waltz produces<sup>136</sup> point to the conclusion that the explanation of relative stability is to be found at the unit level instead of the system's level: bipolar models are more stable because for the two states involved 'the benefits of a calculated response stand out most clearly and the sanctions against irresponsible behavior achieve their greatest force', as well as because they are less interdependent. In multipolar systems 'dangers are diffused, responsibilities unclear, and definitions of vital interests easily obscured'. Thus Waltz concludes that in a multipolar world miscalculation is the principal cause of war, while in a bipolar world overreaction is the main risk. This expansion of his theory, however, takes him far away from the usually celebrated parallel of system's theory with the micro-economic theory of the market<sup>137</sup>. Competition under a market structure, the adaptation to which makes states survive or perish, is the dominant descriptive analogy for international politics in his work<sup>138</sup>. However, by presenting miscalculation and overreaction as the sources of causes of conflicts, Waltz relies on socialization processes rather than on market processes. Actually, Waltz mentions socialization himself as one of the two processes through which the constraining influence of the structure of the international system is felt, but does not develop on this theme<sup>139</sup>.

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<sup>135</sup> Waltz, ibid., p. 620.

<sup>136</sup> Waltz, ibid., pp. 622-624.

<sup>137</sup> A critique of Waltz's parallel of international politics with market behaviour is provided by Timothy McKeown, 'The Limitations of "Structural" Theories of Commercial Policy', International Organization, (40), 1, 1986, pp. 43-64.

<sup>138</sup> This position is best exemplified by Waltz's observation that 'a state can behave as it pleases, but it will fare badly if some of the other parties are making reasonably intelligent decisions'; Waltz, 'Reflections', p. 331.

<sup>139</sup> He states that socialization 'encourages similarities of attributes and of behavior', Theory of International Politics, p. 76; socialization is also mentioned on pp. 128-129. A similar view is presented by Christensen and Snyder, although they do not think it a problem for Waltz's parsimonious theory. They suggest to link miscalculation and overreaction to Jervis's theory of misperception; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, 'Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity', International Organization, (44), 2, 1990, pp. 137-168. Waltz's negligence of

If one is to understand conflict, one has to look at miscalculation and overreaction, that is, processes at the unit level, at the elite-level, that act as a filter through which systemic forces operate. What then remains of the inherent logic in multipolar and bipolar systems? Moreover, Richardson shows that the historical record of bipolar systems is not as stable as Waltz suggests and that one could think of several 'logical' arguments in favour of multipolarity as a promotor of relative stability<sup>140</sup>.

It should therefore be concluded that first there is no inherent logic about the relative stability of either bipolarity or multipolarity, and that, at best, the matter is still an empirical question to be verified. Second, there is reason to believe that the explanations of military conflict of either type of system require variables at the unit level. These include socialization processes at the level of political elites. What is left of Waltz's impressive deductive power is a relatively small skeleton of hypotheses to be tested.

This skeleton, moreover, is of a highly static nature: Waltz's deductive reasoning cannot explain change from one type of system to another<sup>141</sup>. For example, it does not follow from Waltz's theory that World War Two would witness the change from a multipolar to a bipolar world, neither can it shed any light on the many efforts that have been made to describe international political history in different types of systems, such as uni-, bi-, and multipolar worlds. This adds up to saying that Waltz uses structure as an independent variable, but is not able to account for the phenomenon itself<sup>142</sup>.

Even though Waltz could retort that changes in the configuration of the system are explained by changes in the relative capabilities of the elements of the system<sup>143</sup>, it implies that if one wants to know more about international relations than the relative merits of multi- and bipolarity respectively, one will have to take refuge in processes that occur within the units of the system. Fortunately for Waltz, a neorealist explanation of such phenomena is available

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socialization is to a certain extent, discussed by Howe, 'Neorealism revisited: the neorealist landscape surveyed through nationalist spectacles', International Journal, (46), 1991, pp. 348-351.

<sup>140</sup> Richardson, 'The academic study of international relations', pp. 60-61

<sup>141</sup> Actually, Ruggie complains that Waltz allows but for one systemic change: from medieval anarchy into the modern states system, Ruggie, 'Continuity and Transformation'; Waltz implicitly does away with this criticism by pointing out that balance-of-power politics has persisted throughout history, in ancient Greece, India, and among Italian city-states, Waltz, 'Reflections', p. 341, thus arriving at the classical position that international politics has not fundamentally changed since the days of Thucydides.

<sup>142</sup> Wendt, 'The agent-structure problem in international relations theory', International Organization, (41), 3, 1987, p. 347.

<sup>143</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics, pp. 97-99; 'A Response to My Critics', p. 331.

in the works of scholars such as Gilpin, Modelski, and, to a certain extent, Kennedy, so that Waltz's framework is supplemented with theories that help account for changes within and across various types of system<sup>144</sup>.

Gilpin's theory provides a clear account of major wars over the last five centuries by pointing at the rational behaviour of national states that tend to challenge the position of a hegemon as soon as the latter tends to decline, a characteristic inherent to hegemonic powers. However, if one puts the theory of hegemonic cycles to the question of how much insight it does give into the explanation of international history, one has to admit that relatively few phenomena are accounted for: Gilpin notes this himself when he observes that most wars are not fought because of structural causes (such as hegemonic wars), but are the product of an escalation process, in which elites' perceptions play an important role<sup>145</sup>. Gilpin, therefore, considers structural theories of hegemonic war to be at best partial, and complementary to others, 'such as those of cognitive psychology and expected utility'<sup>146</sup>.

A further problem is that theories of hegemonic conflict cannot indicate when a hegemon is exactly a hegemon. Kennedy's analysis shows the existence of a bipolar world at the beginning of the 20th century with the United States and Russia as main contenders. At the same time, British decline had unmistakably set in. But what does a theory of hegemonic cycles explain if allows for the flexibility of 50 years in order to assure that a transformation of the configuration of the international system has taken place? Was the United States a hegemon in 1900, 1917, 1939, or 1945? Did Britain conclude its downfall in those years? Apparently, one should draw the conclusion that an objective hegemon need not be an effective hegemon. There is no compelling systemic reason why ascending powers will assume that role. The performing of hegemonic functions requires the will to do so<sup>147</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> It is in this sense that Nye considers Gilpin's analysis to be the substantive saviour of Waltz's approach, 'Neorealism and Neoliberalism', p. 245.

<sup>145</sup> Robert Gilpin, 'The Theory of Hegemonic War', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, (18), 4, 1988, pp. 592-593.

<sup>146</sup> Gilpin, ibid., pp. 605-606.

<sup>147</sup> This is the core of Susan Strange's analysis of America's present hegemonic position; 'The Persistent Myth of Lost Hegemony'.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Neorealist theories of military conflict can only partially explain the history of international relations. Neorealists would be among the first to accept that and call for complementary theories of foreign policies of national states which would give additional strength to structural theories of world politics. However, I have claimed that neorealists cannot even sustain their own empirical claims without incorporating processes at the level of political elites. This fault will be illustrated by an analysis of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1951 in the following chapter.

### Chapter 3: Can neorealism explain Anglo-American relations ?

#### 3.1 Introductory remarks

So far, we have discussed neorealism mainly from a theoretical point of view. It is as important to determine to what extent neorealism succeeds in explaining a so-called crucial case study. It has been argued that Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956 constitute such a case. The analysis will start from Waltz's parsimonious theory of international politics. Successively, other neorealist notions will be added, first, the theory of hegemonic war, such as offered in the works of Gilpin, Modelski, and Kennedy; second, international regime theory which supposedly gives a more detailed explanation of international relations than the narrow approach of Waltz. It will be contended that a regime analysis of the various issue areas relevant to the United States and the United Kingdom allow for the interpretation that Great Britain was not completely submitted to the whims of the new postwar hegemon, and that therefore it was not completely irrational of the British foreign policy elite in the late 1940s and early 1950s to think that Great Britain was a world power with important 'responsibilities' after all, and, moreover, that her position was recognized by the United States<sup>1</sup>. These perceptions would subsequently prove crucial for the understanding of the foreign policies of the Churchill and Eden Governments in the mid-1950s.

#### 3.2 Parsimonious neorealism

##### 3.2.1 Waltz's theory of international politics

The classic interpretation of the Suez crisis depicts it as the moment when Great Britain and France learned their lesson: they no longer belonged to the great world powers, but had sunk back into the ranks of minor powers that are dependent on consent of the world's leader before engaging into military adventures. This type of analysis entails a claim about both a change in the configuration of the international political system and about the specific way in which the constraints of that system on its units actually operate. Suez was to symbolize the transformation of the international political system from a multipolar world into a bipolar world, that took place during the Second World War. The leading powers of the prewar

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<sup>1</sup> In this sense, it is wise to follow D.C. Watt's advice not to read back into political developments of the early postwar period from today's perspective of Great Britain having sunk back into the ranks of the smaller powers. Such an attitude would imply the ignoring of the precise nature of the power relationships and perceptions of them at the time. It could be claimed that a neorealist analysis will fall prey to exactly that trap. D. Cameron Watt, Succeeding John Bull. America in Britain's Place, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, etc., 1984, pp. 22-23.

period, Great Britain, France, and Germany, and, to a lesser degree, Japan and Italy, had been eclipsed by the United States, and, a few years later, the Soviet Union. As such, the old leaders had to comply with the rules of the game of international politics, and had to accept the primary importance of the security interests of the new leaders.

Waltz explicitly refers to this change as an illustration of his systemic theory. He observes that the states who lost their great power status in the course of the Second World War had to follow the commandments of the new structure<sup>2</sup>. Those degraded states must adapt to new circumstances, so runs the argument of selection: states, if they are interested in survival in an anarchical world, have to act according to changed realities: 'even though constrained by a system's structure, a unit of the system can behave as it pleases. It will, however, fare badly if some of the other parties are making reasonably intelligent decisions'<sup>3</sup>.

In practical terms, this implies that reality will catch up with a state that prefers to ignore the realities of the international system. This line of argument is troubling for two reasons. First, it almost adds up to saying that France and Britain had to meet with their Suez, as a kind of punishment for their aspirations to be a world power. Second, it may indicate that Waltz's theory of inter-state behaviour becomes impossible to falsify: if states of minor importance develop behaviour that is inconsistent with their place in the system, then this can never be brought against Waltz's theory, because his answer can always be: 'Yes, but wait and see: sooner or later that state will meet its fate'<sup>4</sup>.

Nevertheless, to Waltz the immediate postwar period and the Suez crisis are a confirmation of his theory that a bipolar world will bring stability through the mechanisms of the international system:

'the United States could dissociate itself from the Suez adventure of its principal allies and subject one of them to heavy financial pressure (-). Enjoying a position of predominance, the United States could continue to focus its attention on its major adversary [the Soviet Union], while disciplining its two allies (-). Opposing Britain and France endangered neither the United States nor the alliance, because the security of Britain and France depended much more heavily on us than our security depended on them'<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Waltz, 'Reflections on "Theory of International Politics"', p. 332.

<sup>3</sup> Waltz, *ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>4</sup> This seems to place this part of Waltz's theory outside the context of justification.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, 'The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory', pp. 621-622.

This line of reasoning is flawed mainly for two reasons. First, the truth is that the alliance was thoroughly shaken by the Suez crisis. At the time, it was feared that the organization would split because of the internal riff between its principal members. Moreover, to the French, the lack of American support at the time of Suez meant that it would never be certain when the United States were ever to defend France's vital interests, which sensation eventually led to the French decision to develop an independent nuclear force, and to leave the military structure of NATO<sup>6</sup>.

Second, instead of asking why the Americans did stop their allies at Suez, it is more interesting to ask why the United States did not stop British and French colonialist practices before 1956<sup>7</sup>: it is true that the Americans encouraged the British to withdraw from India in 1947 and the French to leave Indo-China in 1954. They strongly disapproved of an imminent British military intervention in the 1951 Abadan oil crisis, but, on the whole, they did not seem too worried about large French and British colonial and semi-colonial possessions and practices<sup>8</sup>.

A neorealist could reply that despite the fact that the attitude of the world's leading state did not correspond to the theory's expectations, the capabilities of France and Britain were would be another important factor to take into account: this would reveal that the United Kingdom and France no longer had the economic capabilities to sustain the interventionist policies of a great power. This interpretation, however, conflicts with numerous British military actions in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, well into the 1960s, until the Wilson Government decided to cut off British responsibilities east of Suez. A neorealist explanation

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<sup>6</sup> Guy Mollet, the French Prime Minister at the time Suez, in a speech to the French National Assembly at the time that the French 'force de frappe' was discussed in 1962, draws a parallel between 1917, 1941, and 1956, and concludes that one can never rely on the forthcoming of American help for French vital interests, 'Du dégagement du neutralisme', printed in Démocratie 62. Supplément 19.7.1962, p. IV, at the archives of the Organisation Universitaire de Recherche Socialiste, Paris, file E5 134BD. His Foreign Secretary Christian Pineau suggested that De Gaulle could take France out of NATO only because of the American attitude at the time of Suez; Christian Pineau, 'Rapport Introductif a Table Ronde: Guy Mollet, l'Europe et les problèmes internationaux', in Fondation Guy Mollet, Témoignages et débats sur Guy Mollet, Arras, 1986, p. 38. Kohl shows how the Suez crisis hastened the development of French nuclear weapons. They had been asked for already after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and in early 1956 a study committee under General Paul Ely had been set up, Wilfrid L. Kohl, French Nuclear Diplomacy, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1971, pp. 35-37, 44. For an overview of French dissatisfaction with NATO in 1955-6, see Alfred Grosser, La Quatrième République et sa Politique Etrangère, Arman Colin, Paris, 1961, pp. 386-389.

<sup>7</sup> Just like they forced the Dutch out of Indonesia between 1946 and 1949.

<sup>8</sup> It should be recalled from Chapter 1 that the United States did not interfere with French policies in Algeria until after the Suez crisis.

of postwar Anglo-American relations with Waltz's parsimonious approach must therefore remain rather limited: (a) it is true that Waltz can observe a change in the configuration of the system, but this observation alone is of little help, because (b) it cannot predict the moment at which a leading power will draw the line and will restrain other powers, and, by consequence, it cannot explain why the United States did not stop Great Britain and France until 1956; (c) it cannot explain many events in the period 1945-1966 which, at first sight, seem to defy systemic expectations of behaviour of the principal actors.

### 3.2.2 Cycles of hegemonic conflict.

A systemic theory, such as Waltz's, cannot offer but a very rudimentary condition under which international political behaviour takes place<sup>9</sup>. Theories that portray international relations as a recurrent pattern of conflict where newly expanding states are challenging and eventually replacing a declining hegemon, offer a backup of Waltz's systemic theory. Basically, such an approach, advocated by Gilpin, Modelski, and, arguably, Kennedy, explains the dynamics of world politics in terms of the changing economic fortunes of nation-states as well as the pressure which may come from both inside nation-states and from the international system. Actually, the importance of geopolitical and technological factors is stressed by those authors, but capabilities seem to be their most important variable<sup>10</sup>.

The advantage of their approach over Waltz's is that they are able to account for changes of the configuration of the international system, and for the behaviour of some of its elements. Their type of analysis, however, carries two disadvantages: first, they cannot say when a hegemon is exactly a hegemon. They therefore describe relatively large periods of history without much precision. In chapter 2 the problem of American hegemony was already alluded to: no theory of hegemony can explain why the United States did not take up its role as world leader until 1945. Kennedy shows that an analysis of capabilities would indicate that already around the turn of the century bipolar world had come into being with the U.S.A. as

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Doyle's evaluation of systemic theories of imperialism, *Empires*, pp. 64, 125-127.

<sup>10</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, pp. 111-130, 252-253. Modelski's theory even revived the old geopolitical theory that world history should be considered as a struggle between maritime and land-based powers; Modelski suggests that world leaders will always be dominant naval powers; cf. Richard Rosecrance, 'Long Cycle Theory and International Relations', *International Organization*, (41), 2, 1987, pp. 288-289.



its probable leader<sup>11</sup>. The end of the First World War provided the opportunity for the United States to assume a role of leadership, but the Americans opted once again for an isolationist foreign policy, because of domestic political considerations<sup>12</sup>, and even in 1945 it was not at all obvious that the United States would not return to isolationism<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, one of the aims of British foreign policy immediately after World War Two was to ensure continued American participation in world affairs. Consequently, theories of hegemonic cycles will remain rather imprecise about the exact state of international politics at a certain moment.

Second, hegemonic cycle theorists can explain international history only by making use of the class of middle powers, which is hard to identify with precision, that may be declining, ascending, or challenging a hegemon. By intuition it sounds very attractive, but it becomes very hard to identify hegemonies with precision. A small overview of recent attempts to classify the United Kingdom in these essential terms, may be illustrative. The common understanding is that the position of the United Kingdom as a world leader has been seriously declining since the late 1890s<sup>14</sup>, and that by 1945 it had ceased to be a world power. Thompson's so-called Relative Power Capabilities Score, an elaboration of data from the Correlation of War project, suggests that in 1946 Great Britain was not a minor power at all. Actually, Thompson argues that the international situation of 1946 resembled much more the (multipolar) situation of 1816<sup>15</sup>. However, in a later study of capabilities, in cooperation with Karen Rasler, the

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<sup>11</sup> Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, Chapter 5; esp. pp. 254-260. The problem is to avoid interpreting history as if what actually happened, had to happen: Charles Tilly warns against this danger, when he argues that around 1300 it was not that obvious at all that centralized nation-states were going to emerge out of the political units of Western Europe: an empire-type of hegemony under the Habsburgs was as likely, Charles R. Tilly, 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making', in Tilly (ed.); The Formation of National States in Western Europe, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1975, pp. 25-31.

<sup>12</sup> Barber argues that the American failure to pursue an internationalist policy by staying outside the League of Nations, can be explained to a large extent by Woodrow Wilson's character and style, James David Barber, The Presidential Character. Predicting Performance in the White House, 3rd. edition, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs NJ, 1985, pp. 13-18, 35-39, 46-47.

<sup>13</sup> Alexander L. George, 'Domestic Constraints on Regime Change in U.S. Foreign Policy: The Need for Policy Legitimacy', in Ole R. Holsti et. al. (eds.), Change in the International System Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1980, pp. 238-251. Stephen Ambrose, Rise to Globalism. American Foreign Policy since 1945, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1988, pp. 78-86; G. John Ikenberry, 'Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony', Political Science Quarterly, (104), 3, 1989, p. 382.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, p. 252; or, John Darwin, 'Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policy Between the Wars', The Historical Journal, (23), 3, 1980, pp. 657-679.

<sup>15</sup> William R. Thompson, 'Polarity, the Long Cycle and Global Power Warfare', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (30), 4, 1986, p. 595.

United Kingdom is classified as a minor power in 1945<sup>16</sup>. An even more peculiar conclusion is drawn by Patrick James and Michael Brecher in their analysis of international crises. They present a capability score and a classification of nation-states relative to that score, and conclude that between 1945 and 1962 the world system can be described as bipolar, while from 1962 onwards one could speak of a polycentric world, in which Great Britain forms one of the centres<sup>17</sup>. The difference can be attributed to Britain's acquisition of thermonuclear weapons in the early 1960s, but it seems odd to consider Britain a more important international actor in 1962 than in 1945.

It is clear that this confusion about the classification of nation-states and the difficulties in explaining when a hegemon will take the role its capabilities prescribe, makes it very difficult to provide a theory of hegemonic cycles that explains more than very general developments over a long time-span, often meaning decades or even centuries. One should wonder whether this serves to understand, say, postwar international relations. Actually, the rather tricky business of classifying makes it difficult to speak of clear a distinction between multipolarity and bipolarity, with obvious implications for a theory such as Waltz's.

In conclusion, it is very doubtful that parsimonious realism, either in the form of Waltz's theory, or in the form of hegemonic cycles theory, can offer more than a general context of Anglo-American relations since the Second World War<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, it cannot answer certain important questions about deviances from predicted behaviour of the hegemon and its less powerful ally.

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<sup>16</sup> William R. Thompson and Karen A. Rasler, 'War and Systemic Capability Reconcentration', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (32), 2, 1988, pp. 350-355.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick James and Michael Brecher, 'Stability and Polarity: New Paths for Inquiry', *Journal of Peace Research*, (25), 1, 1988, pp. 31-42.

<sup>18</sup> No attempt is made here to assess the validity of an analysis based on game theory; so far, game-theoretical analyses of the Suez crisis have been suggested by Michael Nicolson and by Shupe and others. Nicolson offers a metagame. Although his aim is to illustrate the usefulness of a metagame rather than explain the Suez crisis, Nicolson is wrong in suggesting that a military confrontation with Israel was one of two options available to Egypt as a response to the cancelling of the Aswan Dam loan; Michael Nicolson, *Formal Theories in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 47-51. Shupe and his collaborators present a hypergame analysis of the Egyptian decision to nationalize the Suez Canal Company. The outcome of the game is determined by the secret character of Egypt's option to nationalize the Company; however, it seems that the lack of anticipation of such a move begs for explanation rather than to use it as a secret option in a hypergame; Michael C. Shupe, and others, 'Nationalization of the Suez Canal. A Hypergame Analysis', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (24), 3, 1980, pp. 477-493.

### 3.3 International regime theory

#### 3.3.1 Introduction

Is it possible to analyze Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956 in terms of international regime theory? What we somehow want to arrive at is a qualification of the dependency relationship between the two countries. Too often, however, international regimes studies pick 'low politics'-issue areas, which, by their very nature, are more likely to produce cooperative outcomes<sup>19</sup>. Security regimes form a neglected area of study: very few attempts have so far been made to interpret security relations between states in terms of international regime theory<sup>20</sup>. It is wise, however, to present Anglo-American relations as the evolution of a security regime; in principle such an analysis could start in 1776, but for the purpose of this study it will be limited to the period between 1945 and 1956.

I suggest to make a distinction between three dimensions of the security regime between the two countries. First of all, the economic dimension refers to the financial and economic relations between the United States and Great Britain, and to how these may influence their political relations. Secondly, the geopolitical or strategic dimension relates to certain structural facilities, such as strategic possessions, military bases, that may be relevant in arming oneself against a third party, in this case the Soviet Union. Thirdly, the diplomatic dimension refers to inter-nation communication that is not directly derived from the first two dimensions.

The noteworthy point is that all three dimensions may produce different power structures for different issue-areas. Moreover, a source of power in one issue-area is not

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<sup>19</sup> Christer Jönsson, International Aviation and the Politics of Regime Change, Frances Pinter, London, 1987, p. 4. This nature of regime research is the very reason why Jönsson chose international aviation as his subject of study, as it covers aspects of both high and low politics.

<sup>20</sup> Exceptions are Jönsson's case study of international aviation, *ibid.*; Robert Jervis, 'Cooperation under the Security Dilemma', World Politics, (30), 2, 1978; Jervis, 'Security Regimes', International Organization, (30), 4, 1982; Roberto Vellano, 'Deterrenza e difesa nell'era nucleare: il caso della Strategic Defense Initiative', in Luigi Bonanate, Anna Cafarena, and Roberto Vellano, Dopo l'Anarchia. Saggi sul superamento dell'immagine anarchica delle relazioni internazionali e sul rischio di ricadervi, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1989, pp. 133-239. Moreover, according to me, both analyses of M.J. Peterson, 'Political Use of Recognition: The Influence of the International System', World Politics, (34), 3, 1982 pp. 324-352, and Paul W. Schroeder, 'The 19th-Century International System: Changes in the Structure', World Politics, (35), 4, 1986, pp. 1-26, about the influence of the international political system should be considered implicit analyses of security regimes.

necessarily effective when applied to others<sup>21</sup>. Hegemonic theory predicts that a hegemon imposes a hierarchy of issue structures, and that he has leverage in most of the issue areas<sup>22</sup>.

The central question of this section will be whether the security regime of the United States and the United Kingdom did as a matter of fact reflect this widely accepted change from a multipolar to a bipolar international system, as neorealists would maintain. It will be contended in this section that such a presumed systemic change was reflected in some issue areas, but not in others. More specifically, it will be shown that the United Kingdom managed to keep some degree of leverage over the United States, most notably in the geopolitical-strategic dimension, and to a lesser extent, under the diplomatic dimension. The implication is the occurrence of a complex relationship of interdependence between the two countries that cannot be characterized by an asymmetry unequivocally favouring the United States. Even more important is the notion that a full appreciation of this security regime of complex interdependence requires the incorporation of perceptions of political elites of the exact place of one's country in such a world in which dependency is not that clear.

This conclusion is inherent to regime theory itself, but is seldom acknowledged. Regime theory manages to give reasonably accurate descriptions of political processes, but cannot explain why regimes tend to acquire a dynamics of their own once they seem to work: regimes sometimes continue to function although little profit can be expected by individual states adhering to the regime. A hegemon's adherence can be explained by its interest in the status quo, but why do other states remain loyal to the regime as well?<sup>23</sup> The important point is that the establishment of a regime shapes interests and expectations as much as it reflects them. This implies that the analysis of the evolution of regimes cannot rely on structural or functional explanations only, but need to incorporate what are called cognitive explanations, that is, those that take elite perceptions into account<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Jönsson, International Aviation, pp. 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> Keohane, After Hegemony, pp. 32-41; Gilpin, The Political Economy of International Relations, pp. 72-80.

<sup>23</sup> Keohane, 'International Institutions: Two Approaches', pp. 387-389.

<sup>24</sup> Jönsson, International Aviation, pp. 15-25; this need is already present in functional explanations of regimes, such as Keohane's (Keohane, After Hegemony, chapter 6). If anticipation of future benefits from regimes forms an important variable, then elite perceptions, and thus, cognitive explanations, have clearly become a factor.

### 3.3.2 Economic Dimension of Postwar Anglo-American Relations

On the whole, economic relations between the United States and the United Kingdom can be described as an asymmetrical relationship in favour of the Americans, thus giving them a source of influence over the foreign policy of Great Britain. However, it will be shown that it is wrong to assume that this leverage could instantly be translated into making the British perfectly conform to American interests. During almost the entire period up until Suez the British economy was in a deplorable state, its foreign debt gigantic, and assistance could only come from the United States. In order to finance its war-efforts, Britain had liquidated over 1 billion pound sterling of overseas investments and had increased its foreign debts to 3 billion at the same time. Britain owed many sterling to notably India (1,1 billion), Egypt (400 million), and Iraq (70 million)<sup>25</sup>.

During the war a lot of the war-effort had been paid for through the Lend-Lease Act, which basically allowed the British to buy now and pay later. Its abrupt termination by the United States in August 1945 caused acute liquidity problems, and the British had to ask for a loan of 3,75 billion dollars, to which the United States agreed only on the condition that the Pound would be made convertible one year after ratification of the loan, which eventually meant July 1947.

British officials expected that other countries would write off some of the British debt in order to help with England's economic recovery, but apart from the United States, which cancelled the Lend-Lease debt, no sterling creditor in Asia or the Middle East was willing to follow. This set the economic stage for Britain's withdrawal from Greece, Turkey and Palestine in 1947, simply because limitless British money seemed to be wasted there, while at home bread, dairy products, sugar, meat and petrol were under restriction, and holidays abroad were forbidden<sup>26</sup>.

This dominance of the United States could have served them in attaining certain political objectives. Three examples of attempts to influence British economic policies will be discussed: first, the Americans tried to open up the British system of preferential trading with their colonies and dominions, in which transactions were being paid in pound sterling. This was part of the American effort to make the British dissolve their Empire. Second, when this

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<sup>25</sup> W.K. Hancock and M.M. Gowing, British War Economy, London, 1949, chapter 19; Richard N. Gardner, Sterling-Dollar Diplomacy, Oxford, 1956; both quoted in Wm. Roger Louis, The British Empire and the Middle East, 1945-1951. Arab Nationalism, the United States and Postwar Imperialism, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1984, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup> Louis, ibid., pp. 11-15.

effort to convert the British to a policy of economic multilateralism failed around 1947, and the Cold War started to dominate world politics, the United States tried to make the United Kingdom give up its substantial trade with the Eastern bloc as an economic part of its containment policy. Third, the United States made an effort to reduce the strength of British oil companies in the Middle East.

#### (A) Preferential trading

The common interpretation of the Marshall plan of 1948 is that the United States used the European dependency on those funds as a political leverage to create compliance with the postwar international order. This order is often characterized as the Bretton-Woods system in which international institutions, such as GATT, IMF and IBRD, promoted a stable international monetary system and free trade. The United States thus succeeded opening up foreign markets to American products<sup>27</sup>. Expenditures such as the Marshall Plan, which, after all, was a grant, and not a system of loans, as well as the American acceptance of European efforts at economic integration in the late 1940s, which basically meant the acceptance of discrimination against American products, are interpreted as short-time sacrifices by the Americans with an eye on obtaining a fully multilateral trade system at some later stage<sup>28</sup>.

This picture, however, ignores the fact that the United States tried to establish an even more complete multilateral international economy in the years immediately following the Second World War, but failed. In other words, their abundant economic power did not serve them in finding their optimal solution. From the moment they entered the Second World War the United States tried to dismantle the Imperial Preferential Trading System that connected the United Kingdom with its colonies and dominions. The Americans tried to use the Lend-Lease Act to undermine the British position especially in the Middle East, by setting up a non-military assistance programme, formally meant to improve the stability of Middle Eastern regimes<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> Keohane, *After Hegemony*, pp. 142-144; cf. Peter Weiler, 'British Labour and the Cold War: the Foreign Policy of the Labour Governments, 1945-1951', *Journal of British Studies*, (26), 1987, p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> Keohane, *ibid.*, pp. 145-146; this is the classic argument of a hegemon being able and prepared to suffer these costs for the sake of international order and stability.

<sup>29</sup> George A. Herring, Jr., *Experiment in Foreign Aid: Lend-Lease, 1941-1945*, University of Virginia, dissertation, University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1965, pp. 337-355. Independent American policies in the Middle East were provoked by the British misuse of Lend-Lease supplies: the British sold goods to Iran and kept the profit (see esp. pp. 348-349).

Already during the negotiations on Lend-Lease in 1941, the United States tried to tie Lend-Lease to the removal of discriminatory British trade policies and to commit the United Kingdom to liberal multilateral trade principles. Another attempt was made during the 1944 Bretton Woods negotiations on postwar monetary arrangements. But both in trade and money the United Kingdom managed to resist a liberal regime by emphasizing the need of national control over economic and monetary policies or the purpose of postwar recovery.

The moment for the Americans did come in 1946 when the British had to negotiate a 3,75 billion dollars loan for their economic survival. Great Britain, because of its economic weakness, had to accept the conditions of the loan. As a first step to embracing a liberal, multilateral world order, the British agreed to make the pound sterling convertible in 1947. The implementation of this measure, however, was halted only 6 weeks after its initiation, because of the massive drain on British reserves<sup>30</sup>. The hegemon was not able to impose its design of a world order of free trade, because of the dislocations of the war: European economic weakness prevented this, and, by consequence, made the British resistant to change their own preferential trading system. Ikenberry argues that the United States did not want to become directly involved in administrating Europe, and therefore, in its implementation of the Marshall Plan, conceived of a relatively independent, economically integrated, Europe as a third force between the Soviet Union and herself. The British, however, wanted to retain their own Imperial system, and wanted to keep their special position in between the United States and Europe, and therefore resisted those American efforts<sup>31</sup>.

In this period, between 1947 and 1950, Great Britain, France, and the emerging Federal Republic of Germany tried to persuade the Americans to remain politically and militarily committed to Europe, by underlining the communist threat, which led the Americans to modify their multilateral trade ideas to the point of accepting a watered-down version of the original plans, in which Keynesian policies and welfare state arrangements in European countries were accepted<sup>32</sup>.

The important point to keep in mind is that not even extreme economic weakness, such as Britain's, or Europe's in general, need give enough political leverage to a political hegemon to impose its will. Although, of course, it should be realized that this analysis is only valid if supported by indications that the American foreign policy elite perceived Europe and Britain

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<sup>30</sup> G. John Ikenberry, 'Rethinking the Origins of American Hegemony', pp. 381-385.

<sup>31</sup> Ikenberry, *ibid.*, pp. 385-390.

<sup>32</sup> Ikenberry, *ibid.*, pp. 395-399.

to be of crucial political and economic importance<sup>33</sup>. Sections 3.3.3 and 3.3.4 will show how important a tool of British diplomacy the furtherance of this American perception has been.

(B) East-bloc trading

Between 1947 and 1954 the United States tried to persuade Western Europe to engage in economic warfare by cutting off trade with the Soviet Bloc. The traditional view is that, by adopting the 1948 European Cooperation Act, the United States linked economic and military aid to Western Europe's trade policies. However, no aid to Western European countries was ever cut off, because the United States accepted their allies' trade policies, even to the point of granting formal exemptions, especially in order to accommodate urgent Western European needs for raw materials from the Soviet Bloc<sup>34</sup>.

Western Europe, and Britain in particular, had a strong interest in trading with the Soviet Bloc, because the exchange of industrial products for raw materials was an important means to save dollars. Newly released documents however, show that in 1948 the United States started to confer with Great Britain about the question of how to impose export-controls on Western Europe, thus confirming British perceptions that they functioned as a go-between; furthermore, the British successfully resisted American pressure to stop the export of industrial products (products on so-called List 1-B). The British Cabinet accepted an embargo on strategic goods (List 1-A), as a means of keeping a source of influence on the Americans in order to prevent them from imposing a complete trade embargo of the Soviet Bloc<sup>35</sup>. The Korean War meant an increase of American pressure on Europe to start a re-armament programme. Events in Korea induced the American Congress to link military aid for that re-armament programme with trade policies, which found its final expression in the Battle Act of October 1951 which forced Western Europe to cut off trade with the Soviet Bloc. Sorensen argues, on the basis of British documents, that at the time of the Korean war the United States was able to coerce Britain and the rest of Western Europe to accept economic warfare against the Soviets by threatening to reduce military aid and to cut off the exports of those American goods that could be processed into goods that Western Europe could then export to Eastern

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. D.C. Watt, Personalities and Policies. Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century, Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1965, p. 71.

<sup>34</sup> M. Mastanduno, 'Trade as Strategic Weapon: American and Alliance Export Control Policy in the Early Postwar Period', International Organization, (42), 1, 1988, pp. 121-150.

<sup>35</sup> Britain also successfully resisted American pressure to extend the embargo of strategic goods to China and North Korea. British trading interests were an important consideration in the British swift decision to recognize communist rule in China in 1949.



Europe. After that war, however, Britain and the rest of Western Europe managed to resist all new initiatives to extend trade controls and managed to persuade the Americans to dismantle controls after 1954<sup>36</sup>.

### (C) Oil production

In the field of oil production the United States was better able to reach its objectives, although this took quite some effort. Originally the idea was to establish an Anglo-American cartel with an International Petroleum commission, but this was never realized because of domestic pressure in the United States against such an arrangement. The agreement which eventually secured American oil interests was implemented through private companies rather than governmental agencies. The arrangement involved the dissolution of the so-called Red-Line agreement of 1928 which had set sharp restrictions on American access to oil production on the Arab peninsula<sup>37</sup>. At the same time, however, the position of the United Kingdom, severely weakened by the end of the Red-Line agreement and by the foundation of Aramco, was not one of complete dependency on the whims of the United States, because the Americans had agreed to the continued existence of the sterling area.

By 1949 the British Government was able to force those countries that were short on dollars, such as the Scandinavian countries, to buy sterling oil. Because that period was characterized by over-production, this meant that British companies sold at the expense of their American competitors. Further protective measures by the Attlee Government in December 1950 led to pressure of American oil companies on the Truman Administration to force a change in British protectionism, but despite an attempt to cut off all Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) assistance to Britain, it only led to the suspension of ECA help for those projects that sustained the British oil industry. Eventually, the Korean War ended the period of overproduction of oil<sup>38</sup>. Nevertheless, although the American Government was successful in breaking the British dominant position in Middle Eastern oil production, it could not simply impose its own terms and had to take into account the oil interests of Great Britain.

The economic relationship between the United States and Great Britain was, in conclusion, clearly asymmetrical. Nevertheless, full political benefits from this asymmetry

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<sup>36</sup> Vibeke Sorensen, 'Economic Recovery versus Containment: the Anglo-American Controversy over East-West Trade, 1947-1951', Cooperation and Conflict, (24), 1989, pp. 69-97.

<sup>37</sup> Keohane, After Hegemony, pp. 150-159.

<sup>38</sup> Keohane, ibid., pp. 159-167.

were not readily available to the Americans. The British managed to keep their system of preferential trading with their Empire, and were successful at postponing a boycott of substantial trade with the Soviet bloc and China until Congressional pressure forced the Truman Administration to threaten its allies with sanctions if trade were not cut off.

It is clear that the basis for this situation limited asymmetry lies with American perception that the United Kingdom (and Europe) was essential for its own security policy. It is therefore obvious that, when one speaks of mere economic dependencies and capabilities, it is not sufficient, as hegemonic theories do, to point to, for example, the simple fact that in 1948 American industrial production totalled 48% of global industrial production. The United States could not impose a liberal multilateral trade order in 1945. Apparently, weaker states can have some bargaining power over their dominant partner<sup>39</sup>.

### 3.3.3 Strategic/geopolitical dimension of the postwar Anglo-American Security Regime

If the British economy in the early postwar period was strongly dependent on the United States' willingness to help the British with their economic recovery, the strategic dimension of the security regime of both countries presents a much less asymmetrical picture<sup>40</sup>. Although certain developments, such as the British withdrawal from Greece and Turkey, the retreat from India, and the giving up of the Palestinian mandate, illustrated that the United Kingdom lacked the economic resources to maintain its pre-war Empire, other aspects indicated that Britain was not yet completely subordinated to American hegemony: Britain retained strong spheres of influence, that provided a source of influence on the United States in certain diplomatic conflicts. Most importantly, the United Kingdom was allowed to keep its privileged position in the Middle East, a privilege that was to become the source of important misperceptions on both sides, when in the mid-1950s American influence in that area was expanding.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. the recent debate about the alleged ability of Western European Governments to further their own policy preferences in relation to the Marshall Plan; see, e.g., M. Hogan, The Marshall Plan. America, Britain, and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987; R. Pollard, 'Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War: Bretton Woods, the Marshall Plan, and American Rearmament', Diplomatic History, (9), 1985; A.S. Milward, The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-1951, Methuen, London, 1984.

<sup>40</sup> Smith extends this to intelligence cooperation between the United States and Great Britain, 'The Special Relationship', Political Studies, (38), 1, 1990, pp. 133-134.

One of the clearest indicators of British weakness is the absolute power the Americans had in sharing nuclear power with the United Kingdom shortly after the war. On the one hand, the British Government favoured the promotion of world cooperation on atomic issues, although this would put an end to the relative advantage in nuclear technology Britain had over other countries. On the other hand, Britain wished to preserve the special relationship they had enjoyed with the Americans in producing the atomic bombs. In two working agreements, concluded by Churchill and Roosevelt in 1943 and 1944, the United Kingdom had allowed the United States certain reservations about sharing knowledge, which enabled them to deny Britain essential information after the war as well. Truman referred to these agreements when he refused cooperation in 1946, after the Attlee Government had announced its plan to construct a large nuclear pile in England and had asked the United States for technological assistance. Truman thus nullified an agreement on nuclear cooperation, concluded with Attlee in November 1945<sup>41</sup>.

The deplorable state of the British economy caused the United Kingdom to withdraw its troops from Greece and Palestine, and to stop its financial assistance to Turkey. In 1946 the British had 40,000 troops in Greece and paid for most of the Greek government's army, which fought against the armed branch of the Greek communist party KKE in the north of Greece. Some people go as far as to characterize Greece since 1944 as a British colony<sup>42</sup>. At the same time British troops in Palestine numbered about 100,000 men. Here the British were caught in the dilemma of having to accept a large wave of Jewish immigrants, who caused a lot of tension with the Palestinian and Arab population, whereas the British preferred to retain their friendship with Arab rulers in order to keep their informal empire in the Middle East intact. The maintenance of this force cost between 30,000,000 and 40,000,000 pounds a year<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, the British supported Turkey financially and diplomatically in its effort to stand up against Russian claims on Turkey's North Eastern provinces and demands for a naval base near the Dardanelles. Turkey's stability and independence was seen as crucial to the protection of British interests in the Middle East<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> James L. Gormly, 'The Washington Declaration and the "Poor Relation": Anglo-American Atomic Diplomacy, 1945-46', *Diplomatic History*, (8), 2, 1984, pp. 125-144.

<sup>42</sup> The British appointed and dismissed prime ministers, directed most departments of state and even influenced the formation of Greek trade unions. Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce. The Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1946*, Atheneum, New York, 1987, pp. 387-388.

<sup>43</sup> Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East*, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, *Armed Truce*, pp. 389-394; Louis, *ibid.*, pp. 73-82.

British economic weakness thus caused a reduction of its overseas commitments. Abroad, this situation was perceived as the beginnings of the final dissolution of the British Empire<sup>45</sup>. It is, however, important to realize that in those early years after the Second World War, British policymakers considered this to be a reduction of their financial burden in order to be better able to maintain an influential position throughout the Empire. It is indeed the contention of Louis's study that the period of the Attlee Government should be interpreted as an attempt to transform Britain's formal rule over most of the Middle East into an informal empire in which Britain's military and economic necessities would be safeguarded by offering development to modern Arab nationalists<sup>46</sup>. In this context it is therefore crucial to realize that to British eyes the 'giving up' of Greece and Turkey implied an understanding with the United States that the Middle East was a British region of influence and that they intended to continue ruling it.

It was all part of an effort to make the Americans realize that the Soviet Union was threatening the precarious balance in Europe and the Middle East, and that American reluctance to assist their European allies would be fatal. That explains why the British gave such short notice to the Americans of their halting of economic assistance to Greece and Turkey<sup>47</sup>, urging them to step in immediately<sup>48</sup>.

The Labour Government thus perceived to have secured British predominance over the Middle East. Moreover, this view was shared by the United States Government: in talks with the British in October and November 1947, the United States recognized that 'the security of the Eastern Mediterranean and of the Middle East is vital to the security of the United States',

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<sup>45</sup> Louis, *ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Louis, *ibid.*, pp. vii, 15-21.

<sup>47</sup> Great Britain communicated its withdrawal to the State Department (incidentally, not to the Greek Government) on 21 February 1947. American assistance to Greece and Turkey was announced one week later. This analysis is confirmed by an early study by Stephen G. Xydis, 'America, Britain, and the USSR in the Greek Arena, 1944-1947', *Political Science Quarterly*, (78), 4, 1963, pp. 589-595. Cf. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East*, pp. 97-102.

<sup>48</sup> It is sometimes claimed that President Truman used the Greek and Turkey crisis to rally the reluctant Americans behind his idea of containment. Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism*, pp. 82-83; For the opposite view, that is, that the United States had decided that Greece and Turkey were fundamental to their security interests as early as February 1946, see Giampaolo Valdoviti, 'American Policy in the Mediterranean. The Operational Codes, 1945-1952', *Working Paper*, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole, 1987, pp. 6-7. For a view of Britain being too weak even to bargain for influence in the Middle East, Bradford Perkins, 'Unequal Partners: The Truman Administration and Great Britain', in Wm. Roger Louis and Hedley Bull (eds.), *The Special Relationship. Anglo-American Relations since 1945*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 54-55.

and that this required that Great Britain keep its strong strategic, political and economic position in those areas. An internal memorandum acknowledged British 'primary responsibility' for the areas, which implied 'that the British should have mutually satisfactory political and economic relations of a long-term nature with the countries in the area, as a foundation for their military position'<sup>49</sup>.

An example of how the British managed to expand their sphere of influence in the Middle East is their success at turning the former Italian colony of Libya into a British client state. Usually, the creation of Libya is heralded as one of the few examples of successful UNO-mediation in the resolution of colonial questions<sup>50</sup>. It now seems clear that the British managed to convince the Americans in 1949 that they would be defending the Middle East from a Soviet attack and that therefore strong military bases in weak Libya would be crucial. The United States agreed to setting up a weak federal state, in which the United Kingdom would dominate the Eastern province of Cyrenaica, in order to avoid Egyptian dominance over her neighbour. An even more compelling indicator of British leverage at that time is the - reluctant- American agreement to Libya joining the sterling area, traditionally an issue of discord between the British and Americans<sup>51</sup>.

This geopolitical predominance, conceded by the Americans, must find its power basis somewhere. Basically, this British influence on the United States finds its source in the impossibility for the Americans to implement a global policy of containment without British cooperation at least until the mid-1950s. The American weakness in their military lines of commands is nicely illustrated by the Anglo-American bilateral aviation regime concluded at Bermuda in 1946. This treaty dealt with air routes, capacity and frequency levels, and fares<sup>52</sup>. This agreement poses a puzzle because it grants a relative advantage to Great Britain. On top

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<sup>49</sup> American paper, n.d. (November 1947); Memorandum in preparation of the Pentagon talks, n.d., Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, 5, p. 575 ff., Cf. Louis, British Empire in the Middle East, pp. 100-102.

<sup>50</sup> E.g., Adrian Pelt, Libyan Independence and the United Nations: A Case of Planned Decolonization, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1970; or the way it is dealt with in textbooks of international organizations, such as A. Le Roy Bennett, International Organizations. Principles and Issues, fourth edition, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey 1988 pp. 115-116. Of course, the late 1980s witnessed some new examples of successful UN-diplomacy, such as in the cases of Namibia and the Western Sahara; cf. G.R. Berridge, Return to the UN. UN Diplomacy in Regional Conflicts, MacMillan, Houndmills, 1991, pp. 71-85, 92-97.

<sup>51</sup> Wm. Roger Louis, 'American anti-colonialism and the dissolution of the British Empire', International Affairs, (61), 1985, pp. 403-409; cf. Louis, British Empire in the Middle East, pp. 265-306.

<sup>52</sup> Jönsson, International Aviation, pp. 32-35.

of that, the British had resisted American attempts in 1944-1945 to impose a multilateral aviation agreement. The bilateral Bermuda agreement was to become the norm for most other bilateral aviation agreements<sup>53</sup>.

The solution to this puzzle lies in the 'issue structure' of international aviation, which was favourable to Great Britain after the World War. Despite American superiority in aeronautical know-how and ability to generate traffic, the 'objective' power bases for the imposition of an aviation regime, Britain had a stronger bargaining position, because the United States lacked route rights as well as landing rights for refuelling at bases located strategically along trunk routes. Only Britain could grant those rights because of its extensive overseas colonies and Commonwealth connections<sup>54</sup>.

This very lack of landing and fuelling rights points to America's inability to implement a strategy of containment from 1947 on without British cooperation. This was alluded to by George Kennan already in 1946, when he observed that containment on a world scale was beyond American resources<sup>55</sup>. This dependency was to last until well into the 1950s. In case of Soviet aggression the United States would have to rely on its medium range bombers to counter such a move. By the end of 1950, the United States possessed only a small number of intercontinental bombers (38 B-36s) and had to rely on its large number of medium range bombers (477). In order to retaliate against a Russian attack, therefore, the Americans were highly dependent on the use of bases in Great Britain. They were thus very worried about the possibility that the Soviet Union would try to quickly neutralize Britain by destroying her air bases by surprise<sup>56</sup>.

The relevance of British bases in the Middle East was their vicinity to important Russian industrial centers that could be reached by those medium range bombers<sup>57</sup>. The direct practical weight of this dependency was shown during the 1948-1949 Berlin Blockade crisis and the first months of the Korean War. When Marshall Sokolovsky walked out on the Allied

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<sup>53</sup> Jönsson, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>54</sup> Jönsson, *ibid.*, pp. 48-49, 156-157. Cf. Susan Strange, States and Markets. An Introduction to International Political Economy, Frances Pinter, London, 1988, pp. 152-159.

<sup>55</sup> Palombit, American Policy in the Mediterranean, p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, 'A "wasting asset". American security and the shifting nuclear balance, 1949-1954', International Security, (13), 3, 1988/1989, pp. 22-23. Cf. D.C. Watt, 'Demythologizing the Eisenhower Era', in Louis and Bull (eds.), The Special Relationship, p. 79.

<sup>57</sup> Robin Edmonds, Setting the Mould. The United States and Britain, 1945-1950, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 116.

Control Council at 20 March 1948 and thus opened the Berlin crisis, one of General Curtis Lemay's contingency plans involved the help of Great Britain in closing off certain trade routes to the Soviet Union, if the Russians were to open fire on trains that could be sent to Berlin in order to test Russian resolve<sup>58</sup>. More importantly, the planes that formed the air-lift, which was to challenge the Russian ring around West-Berlin, flew predominantly from British bases. Similar use of British resources was made when at the beginning of the Korean War nuclear weapons were ostensibly flown into Britain as part of a 'normal rotation' as a warning against Stalin that the United States meant serious business<sup>59</sup>.

### 3.3.4 Diplomatic dimension of Anglo-American security regime

Great Britain, despite its economic weakness, was thus able to exert a certain amount of political pressure on the United States, because it possessed some amount of leverage in the strategic and diplomatic issue-areas. The Americans realized themselves that they could not dictate their terms to the British: Prime Minister Clement Attlee's mission to Washington in December 1950 to dissuade President Truman from deploying nuclear weapons in the Korean War, should be interpreted in this context: Secretary of State Dean Acheson recommended Truman not to ignore British views 'since we can bring American power into play only with the cooperation of the British'<sup>60</sup>.

More importantly, at the time of the Korean War this British advantage was perceived at Whitehall as well. This is shown by the minutes of the permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir William Strang. He thought it possible to exert concessions from the United States because it was 'equally true that the Americans cannot do without us (-). Though the Americans often behave as though our views and interests were of little regard to them,

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<sup>58</sup> Avi Shlaim, The United States and the Berlin Blockade, 1948-1949. A Study in Crisis Decision Making, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 130.

<sup>59</sup> Rosemary Foot, 'Nuclear coercion and the ending of the Korean conflict', International Security, (13), 3, 1988/1989, pp. 57-60. Cf. Simon Duke, U.S. Defence Bases in the United Kingdom. A Matter for Joint Decision?, MacMillan, London, 1987; Duncan Campbell, The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier. American Military Power in Britain, Paladin Books, London, 1986.

<sup>60</sup> Trachtenberg, 'A "wasting asset"', p. 23, see esp. footnote 70: he quotes Acheson, 'Memorandum for the President', December 12, 1950; Minutes of meetings of the National Security Council, University Publications of America, reel 1.

in the last resort, they know they must rely on us. This strengthens our position in dealing with them'<sup>61</sup>.

The crucial point, of course, is that this British strategic and geopolitical advantage could be an asset only if the United Kingdom and its Commonwealth and Empire were perceived to be essential for the defence of a free world against Communist aggression. This presumes that a perception of communist aggression prevailed. At this point, the British possibly accomplished its most precious aim. Much of postwar British diplomacy had been directed at persuading the Truman Administration that Communism was threatening the West, and that Britain and its Empire were an essential element of Western defence. It is to this attempt at persuasion that we now turn<sup>62</sup>.

The future of the British Empire and Commonwealth was one of the principal issues that strained war-time relations between the United States and Great Britain has been. On various occasions, the Americans had made it clear that they were not fighting the war for the preservation and restoration of the British Empire. In the American press the colonial issue was a regular topic of discussion, usually in the context of the establishment of a postwar international society, in which nations that were still under colonial rule would be granted eventual independence<sup>63</sup>. The British had been very worried about this permanent feature of American foreign policy, and one could argue that they considered it a main task to attempt to 'educate' the Americans on the merits of the British Empire. The success of these efforts eventually produced the structural misperception in London that one could persuade the Americans to respect certain British interests simply by providing them with information about these interests.

Louis shows how American anti-colonialism was strongly balanced with security needs: during the war the United States did not support the 'Quit India now'-movement because they

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<sup>61</sup> Minute, Sir William Strang, 31 January 1951, PREM 8, pt. 4: 1405, PRO, quoted by Rosemary J. Foot, 'Anglo-American Relations in the Korean Crisis: the British Effort to Avert an Expanded War, December 1950-January 1951', *Diplomatic History*, (10), 1, 1986, pp. 54-55.

<sup>62</sup> The analysis that follows, finds its source in a new stream of literature on postwar British foreign policy, which is based on newly released documents on both sides of the Atlantic. Ryan notes that a new school has emerged which claims that the British power position under the Attlee Government was not as weak as it is usually portrayed; Ryan, *The Vision of Anglo-America*, pp. 8-10. Cf. Watt's suggestion that the historical analysis of events passes through 6 different stages, one crucial phase being the release of new documents, Donald Cameron Watt, 'Britain and the Historiography of the Yalta Conference and the Cold War', *Diplomatic History*, (13), 1, 1989, pp. 69-73.

<sup>63</sup> Louis argues that F.D. Roosevelt was in no hurry to effectuate this: he was a gradualist, as Woodrow Wilson had been, but was surprised at the stirring the War caused in the colonies of his European allies, Louis, 'American anti-colonialism and the dissolution of the British empire', p. 397.



deemed British predominance in India essential for the war against Japan. Similarly, they accepted that Libya became a British protectorate in 1950, because they accepted British presence in the Middle East as crucial in the battle against communism<sup>64</sup>. In this context the genesis of the United Nations Organization, and especially the installation of its Trusteeship Council can be interpreted as the result of an effort by the British to on the one hand prevent the Americans from imposing their anti-colonialist sentiment on the U.N. principle of self-determination, and, on the other hand involve the Americans in a certain kind of colonial tutelage themselves, by urging them to take on the responsibility of administering certain trust territories themselves<sup>65</sup>.

During the Second World War the Foreign Office held the view that the Americans did not really understand the matter of the Empire that well. In the Autumn of 1942 already, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden thought that 'the American position is becoming highly absurd (-), for while they apparently contemplate disappearance of the Dutch Colonial Empire, and perhaps our own, they have guaranteed the integrity of French territories, which is more than we have done'. In December of that year, Colonial Secretary Stanley wrote to the Cabinet that 'it is, indeed, certain that much criticism is the result of a most complete ignorance regarding conditions in British colonial territories'<sup>66</sup>. The British Government had been alarmed by warnings from their Washington Embassy that the United States were considering Great Britain increasingly as a Junior partner. An article in Life by Henry Luce that Autumn, which was very critical of British colonialism, caused that much panic at the Foreign Office, although Eden considered it 'too extravagant to be credited', that a concerted effort was made to change American public opinion about the British war effort and about the benign influence of her Empire on the population of its colonies<sup>67</sup>.

The decision not to include existing colonial empires in the U.N. Trusteeship system, and to reserve this agency for former mandates of the League of Nations and for colonies of the Axis-powers, should therefore be considered a success of British diplomacy. The British had been very anxious for the trusteeship-system not to harm their Empire. In January 1945 Eden reassured Churchill that 'there is not the slightest question of liquidating the British

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<sup>64</sup> Louis, The British Empire in the Middle East, passim.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Louis, ibid., pp. 401-402.

<sup>66</sup> Both quoted in John J. Sbraga, Anglo-American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia, 1941-1945, Garland Publishing, New York, 1983, pp. 126-127.

<sup>67</sup> Ryan, The Vision of Anglo-America, pp. 21-31.

Empire', and judged the trusteeship system a useful way of convincing the Americans that they should accept colonial responsibility themselves<sup>68</sup>. This conviction to draw the United States into some kind of colonial arrangement helps to understand Lord Hankey's proposal towards the end of May 1945 to turn Syria and the Lebanon into a trusteeship and to involve the Americans in its administration in order to resolve the critical situation in which British troops were interfering with fights between French troops and the Syrians that month<sup>69</sup>.

Similarly the Labour Government's retreat from Empire, as evidenced in India, Burma, and Palestine, was not meant as a first step toward its total dissolution, but as a way out of a precarious economic situation, while keeping intact the rest of the Empire, even though influence would be more of an informal than of a formal nature. As a matter of fact, the Empire and its sterling trading area was considered a necessary condition for economic recovery. The attempts of the Attlee Government at involving the Americans in Western security served therefore two essential aims: first, the easing of the financial burden of Britain's worldwide commitments, and second, getting the Truman Administration to recognize British predominance in the Middle East and Africa. Both aims required playing the Communist card.

The Communist danger was to make the Americans realize that they should not withdraw in isolation, but should take responsibility for the defence of Western Europe. At the same time, this would bring home to the United States that they needed the strategic assets of the British Empire for this defence<sup>70</sup>. The explicit recognition of the British position in the Middle East in 1947 when the United States took over British responsibilities over Greece and Turkey, should therefore be considered as a success of Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee, although the British withdrawal from Palestine later that year was obviously much more difficult to explain to the strongly pro-Jewish Americans<sup>71</sup>.

The foundation of NATO can be considered as the completion of what amounts to an effort to make the Americans pay for the continuation of the British Empire. Recent studies

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<sup>68</sup> Sbrega, Anglo-American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia, pp. 142-146.

<sup>69</sup> Louis, British Empire in the Middle East, pp. 147-156: the trusteeship solution would solve the British dilemma how to exploit French weakness in the Middle East in order to improve the British position without forcing the French to leave the area completely, which would inevitably have repercussions on the British presence in the Middle East.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Martin H. Folly, 'Breaking the vicious circle: Britain, the United States, and the Genesis of the North Atlantic Treaty', Diplomatic History, (12), 1, 1988, p. 77.

<sup>71</sup> Caroline Anstey, 'The Projection of British Socialism: Foreign Office Publicity and American Opinion, 1945-1950', Journal of Contemporary History, (19), 1984, pp. 436-437.

have challenged the traditional view that the Americans created NATO as a response to a perceived Soviet threat to American security, and imposed it on its allies. New evidence suggests that Great Britain played an influential role in cajoling the Americans into accepting the need to guarantee Western security<sup>72</sup>.

In 1947 the Joint Planning Staff of the British military forces, together with Attlee, Bevin, and Minister of Defence Lord Alexander, originally developed a conception of defence that would combine the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, which would enable the British to avoid further commitments that would not be directly related to their three 'pillars of defence policy' that had to be defended at all costs: the United Kingdom, the sea communications to the United States and the Dominions, and the Middle East. At that time the British were rather reluctant to commit themselves to other arrangements, such as those that were being discussed at the Western European treaty negotiations. However, when in January 1948 Holland and Belgium argued that Communism was a much greater threat than Germany, the British gave up their reluctance and used the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and Soviet pressure on Norway to sign a non-aggression pact in early March 1948, to further the idea of a North Atlantic security system<sup>73</sup>.

Later that year, in order to secure Congressional approval of NATO, as well as of the Military Assistance Programme, which would extend American military aid to Europe, the United Kingdom engaged in a publicity campaign in the United States in order to show that Communism was a threat to the whole world and that Britain would be a reliable ally of the United States with substantial contribution of its own, such as the suppression of the communist insurgency in Malaya at that time<sup>74</sup>.

On the other hand, it was not the case that British policymakers were just scheming to make the Americans pay for their recovery as a world power. An analysis of perceptions at the Foreign Office at that time clearly shows that the Soviet Union was perceived to be a

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<sup>72</sup> See for an overview of the literature, Folly, 'Breaking the Vicious Circle', p. 60, footnotes 3-5.

<sup>73</sup> Folly, 'Breaking the vicious circle', esp. pp. 64-68. The British originally conceived of NATO as Britain, America and Canada having control over strategy, so that their claim of a special relationship would gain credit, and it would seem that the U.K. was a world power nearly of America's standing; Folly, pp. 69-70.

<sup>74</sup> Anstey, 'The projection of British socialism', pp. 442-443. It must be admitted, however, that not all Foreign Office propaganda was directed at convincing the Americans that British imperial policy served at fighting Communism: in Mau Mau revolt in Kenya provoked a Foreign Office propaganda campaign in the United States directed at projecting the Mau Mau revolt as a tribal uprising which had nothing to do with Communism; A.S. Cleary, 'The myth of the Mau Mau in its international context', *African Affairs*, (89), no. 355, 1990, pp. 227-245.

real threat, and therefore not just a handy bogey-man to obtain guarantees of American assistance, but it was, of course, a convenient and deliberately sought side-effect<sup>75</sup>.

That the appeal to communist aggression did not always guarantee success is shown by the way Great Britain tried to influence American policies towards Iran between 1945 and 1951. An attempt was made to defend the British privileged position -and that of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company- by pointing to potential Russian aggression. The United States, however, was unwilling to defend the interests of this British enclave at Abadan, and urged the British Government to give in to Iranian demands for a greater share in the profits of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (not in the least to further the position of Aramco). When Iran nationalized the oil refinery at Abadan and the British had flown troops to Bahrain and Kuwait in order to secure British oil interests, the United States blocked a military operation by exerting strong pressure on the Attlee Government<sup>76</sup>.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The extent to which neorealism offers a satisfactory explanation of postwar Anglo-American relations seems to be rather limited. While parsimonious neorealism, in the works of Waltz and of the theoreticians of cycles of hegemonic conflict, offers some necessary insight into changing power configurations of the international system, it can only prove that the British position is declining while the American one is rising. However, it cannot indicate with certainty the nature of their relationship nor of their world position. It might not even be able to distinguish a multipolar from a bipolar system.

International regime theory is better able to describe Anglo-American postwar relations, but it has to take account of the perceptions of the political elites if it is to explain the dynamics of international regimes. Moreover, its traditional emphasis on studies of international trade have caused a neglect of aspects of power and influence which underlie interdependent relations. It was shown that although Great Britain was economically dependent on the United States to a large extent, the United States could not use that advantage to impose its will in order to create a postwar world order that would fit its own purposes. This is explained by the fact that in different issue-areas, notably the strategic/geopolitical one, the United Kingdom still was in a relatively strong position. This created to a certain extent a

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<sup>75</sup> Peter G. Boyle, 'The British Foreign Office View of Soviet-American Relations, 1945-1946', Diplomatic History, (3), 3, 1979, pp. 317-319.

<sup>76</sup> Richard W. Cottam, The United States and Iran. A Cold War Case Study, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1988, pp. 103 ff; Louis, British Empire in the Middle East, pp. 671 ff.

reversed dependency relationship as to the Middle East, which was fully recognized by the United States. It is therefore wrong to say that the United Kingdom lacked influence and prestige. It still had quite some leverage over the United States<sup>77</sup>.

The important contribution of regime theory is the notion that regimes not only reflect influence relations and expectations, but create them as well. It is therefore not that extraordinary that, by the time the Attlee Government was replaced with the Churchill Government in 1951, the impression took hold that, thanks to the sterling area, Britain was back on its way to the top. At the Foreign Office Sir Oliver Franks wrote to Attlee in July 1950 that only two years before, Britain had been one of many European countries, but had acquired new vigour and strength thanks to the Commonwealth and the stronger currency, and now had an improved overseas payment position: 'we are out of the queue, one of two world powers outside Russia. This has been recognized by the recent exchange of messages'<sup>78</sup>.

It should be realized that the position of British influence in the Middle East is crucial to this perception. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin thought that loss of it would lead the United States 'to write us off as a first class power'<sup>79</sup>. International regime theory explains why these perceptions could be held: a weak economic position was compensated for by a strong strategic/geopolitical position. However, elites' perceptions are essential. The Americans would recognize British predominance in certain areas only, notably the Middle East, because they perceived a Communist threat and perceived the British role in containing that threat as crucial. It has been shown that the British tried to direct that threat perception to their own benefit, by extracting recognition of their influential position in certain parts of the world.

By the time, therefore, that Anthony Eden became British Foreign Secretary for the third time in 1951, it is still correct to speak of a complex, interdependent relationship between American and Britain rather than of an English dependency on the United States. Precisely because the -what has been called- security regime between Great Britain and the United States after 1945 shapes as well as reflects power and expectations, it appears logical and inevitable to put an emphasis on elite perceptions if we want to understand the evolution of this security regime between 1951 and 1956. This brings up the question of how we can analyze elite

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<sup>77</sup> Alan Dobson extends this period of relative British influence to 1961, Suez notwithstanding, and argues that the period 1961-1967 should be considered as phase of transition in which the United Kingdom lost its leverage; Alan Dobson, 'The years of transition: Anglo-American relations 1961-1967', Review of International Studies, (16), 1990, pp. 239-258, esp. pp. 239-242.

<sup>78</sup> Quoted by Edmonds, Setting the Mould, p. 229.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted by Weiler, 'British Labour and the Cold War', p. 67.

perceptions in a systematic way. The next chapter will therefore discuss the nature of individual cognitive beliefs, several methods of identifying them as well as ways of connecting individual beliefs to foreign policy decision.

**PART II: THE CONTRIBUTION OF COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY**





## Introduction to Part II

The Anglo-American security-regime between 1945 and 1956 cannot be understood unless one makes reference to the role of political elites. It has been argued that policymakers' perceptions are shaped by the way a security-regime is actually operating. In turn, these perceptions are the basis of mutual expectations that actors hold towards the regime. In other words, the actual working of a security-regime, and thus of constraints imposed by the structure of the international political system, is mediated through individual policymakers' perceptions. This interplay between structural constraints and individual perceptions can provide a clue to understanding the relative freedom of action of Great Britain and France until 1956 and their stubborn neglect of American opposition to a military solution to the Suez-conflict. If this is the case, it is important to find tools that can assess the role of these perceptions and subsequent expectations with a bit more precision.

Part II discusses the possibility of using cognitive belief systems of individual policymakers as an appropriate way to describe these perceptions and expectations. Chapter 4 thus provides an overview of several techniques to measure cognitive belief systems. It is argued that the so-called Operational Code construct is a suitable technique, and that the Brecher-model is very helpful in developing a research design.

It can be objected, however, that the role of individual perceptions should not be measured by cognitive belief systems, because these perceptions and expectations can be better accounted for by other factors. These factors include a policymaker's personality, the institutional setting he belongs to, as well as small group processes that come into play, as major foreign policy decisions are often taken by a number of policymakers rather than one individual. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a discussion of the relative importance of such factors, and address the question to what extent they make the incorporation of cognitive belief systems superfluous.



## Chapter 4: The role of cognitive beliefs

### 4.1 Introductory remarks

Cognitive belief systems of policymakers are a proper device to understand the perceptions and expectations, that guide their attitude towards the constraints of, for instance, a security-regime. The employment of belief systems implies that we are entering the borderland between political science and social psychology<sup>1</sup>. Traditionally, political scientists have been rather sceptical about the borrowing of tools from the field of social psychology. Three types of arguments are usually pronounced. First, even though many attempts have been made to apply laboratory experiments and simulations to situations relevant to foreign policy decision making, such as bargaining and negotiations, or to decision making under stress, most works have been discredited for their dissimilarity with the real world of decision making<sup>2</sup>. Second, early studies that incorporated psychological factors concentrated on psychological aberrations or pathological needs of individual politicians, like Hitler and Stalin, but were criticized for their negligence of systematically studying the link between such factors and foreign policy formation<sup>3</sup>. The third, and most powerful, line of attack points to the irrelevance of the individual level, and therefore of psychological variables, because of the efficiency of variables at the national or systemic level<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, in this chapter it will be argued that cognitive belief systems are occasionally indispensable to the explanation of events at the level of both the nation-state and the international political system.

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<sup>1</sup> See for a general overview of the field, Philip E. Tetlock, 'Psychological Advice in Foreign Policy. What do we have to contribute?', American Psychologist, (41), 5, 1986, pp. 557-567. Actually, the acceptance of tools from social psychology assumes adherence to the notion that (certain aspects of) politics can only be understood by looking at the intentions of the actors involved; Stanley Hoffmann, 'On the Political Psychology of Peace and War: A Critique and an Agenda', Political Psychology, (7), 1, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Philip E. Tetlock, 'Psychological Research on Foreign Policy. A Methodological Overview', in Wheeler, Ladd and Phillip (eds.), Review of Personality and Social Psychology, Volume 4, SAGE, Beverly Hills etc., 1983, pp. 47-48; Ole R. Holsti, 'Foreign Policy Decision Makers Viewed Psychologically: "Cognitive Process" Approaches', in James N. Rosenau (ed.), In Search of Global Patterns, the Free Press, New York, 1976, pp. 123-124.

<sup>3</sup> Holsti, ibid., pp. 125-127; Michael J. Shapiro and G. Matthew Bonham, 'Cognitive Process and Foreign Policy Decision Making', International Studies Quarterly, (17), 2, 1973, p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Some claim that this is an empirical question rather than a theoretical premise, and everything depends on how specific and detailed an explanation one seeks, e.g. Tetlock, 'Psychological Research on Foreign Policy', p. 46; Holsti, 'Foreign Policy Makers Viewed Psychologically', pp. 125-127. Chapters 2 and 3 have shown however, that the individual level of analysis may be needed rather quickly, if one is not to remain with relatively abstract and uninformative analyses.

#### 4.2 Cognitive beliefs

One of the principal reasons why one should focus on the role of cognitive belief systems is that they serve as a mediating device between an individual and his physical and social environment<sup>5</sup>. The assumption is that an individual cannot absorb all environmental stimuli that he encounters, and therefore has to develop a mechanism, call it a filter, or a set of lenses, which helps him in organizing incoming information. He therefore knows how to note certain stimuli rather than others, and how to interpret them. These interpretations then serve as a basis for action. Cognitive beliefs are one such device. A belief system, therefore, is an individual's view of what the world around him looks like in its essence. It consists therefore of a more or less coherent whole of opinions about his environment and can as such contain both descriptive and prescriptive notions about that environment. This conception of a belief system has been questioned on three grounds.

1. Ideology. The term belief system is often considered identical to ideology and thus superfluous<sup>6</sup>. Sometimes this reflects a political stand: a belief system represents a whole of ideas that should not be professed; but usually one intends to convey that beliefs serve as a mask behind which a politician hides his real motives<sup>7</sup>. Others object to the idea that beliefs and ideology would be interchangeable: to them an ideology offers more than an analysis of the surrounding world, because it contains above all an idea about what the world should look like as well as a programme of action in order to arrive at that ideal<sup>8</sup>.

2. Political culture. Some critics argue that belief systems are only a reflection of political opinions, values, and attitudes that one can find throughout society as a whole. Behind

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<sup>5</sup> Harold and Margaret Sprout are the pioneers of the study of the interaction between physical and social environmental factors and politics, see e.g. their The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1965.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Charles W. Kegley, Jr., 'Assumptions and Dilemma's in the Study of Americans' Foreign Policy Beliefs: A Caveat', International Studies Quarterly, (30), 4, 1986, p. 460.

<sup>7</sup> This is thought to be true for the field of international politics especially. According to Morgenthau the true nature of foreign policy is 'concealed by ideological justifications and rationalizations', Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace, 5th edition, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1973, p. 88, quoted by Richard Little and Steve Smith in, 'Introduction', Little and Smith (eds.), Belief Systems and International Relations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., John MacLean, 'Belief Systems and Ideology in International Relations: a Critical Approach', in Little and Smith (eds.), ibid., pp. 64-68.

this claim lies the controversy between sociologists who see a belief system as a product of society, and psychologists, who think the individual to be its source<sup>9</sup>.

3. Cause or effect ? The idea that a belief system serves as a filter of information is disputed on epistemological grounds. The principle of a filtering function implies that an individual's subjective world can be separated from an objective, and measurable, outer world. But cognitive beliefs should be considered as both a product and producer of that outer world. By implication, a belief system can never serve as an independent variable in a research framework. At best, it can be an instrument of descriptive value<sup>10</sup>.

Some of these problems are slightly exaggerated and tend to hamper the development of relevant research. I propose that the conception of belief systems as an attribute of individuals is a correct way out of these objections. Ideology has connotations that bring the belief system beyond the individual level. They are alike, because both refer to prescriptive as well as descriptive opinions, and because both entail some guidance for political actions. An ideology, however, refers to beliefs held by collectivities, such as a group or a party, and is much more explicit in its philosophical sources<sup>11</sup>.

A belief system should be separated from political culture, because it seems rather limited to explain the behaviour of foreign policy makers by referring to generally held attitudes in their society. It seems more practical to concentrate on the opinions of individual politicians and to consider both ideology and political culture as elements belonging to a wider context, which may serve to formulate a correct interpretation of the intentions of a given cognitive belief<sup>12</sup>. For instance, holding the belief that the promotion of human rights is an important goal of one's foreign policy, may be interpreted differently in the Netherlands and in North Korea.

If these boundaries are not clearly drawn, it will be difficult to arrive at insightful empirical analyses. This is evident in Margot Light's study of Soviet foreign policy, which she

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Little, 'Belief Systems in the Social Sciences', in Little and Smith (eds.), ibid., pp. 36-49.

<sup>10</sup> In the collection of essays, edited by Little and Smith, three authors are of that opinion: Dillon, MacLean, and Tooze.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Holsti, 'Foreign Policy Makers Viewed Psychologically', p. 122, footnote 3.

<sup>12</sup> This is borrowed from Quentin Skinner, who shows that political culture forms a linguistic context in which the development of political philosophy should be interpreted, Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', History and Theory, (8), 1969, pp. 3-53.

attempts to explain by referring to Marxist-Leninist ideology<sup>13</sup>. Nowhere, however, does she mention the opinions of Soviet leaders, although she calls her analysis a belief system approach. No attention is being paid to the literature that argues that Soviet foreign policy, already since Stalin, has followed a perfectly realist line, despite its ideology<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, Barbara Roberson is expanding on Islam, but hardly tries to connect islamic beliefs to the foreign policy of individual countries<sup>15</sup>. Neither ideology nor culture can therefore meaningfully substitute for belief systems.

The controversy over the functioning of a belief system as a filter mechanism is self-defeating too. If one does not accept their filtering capacity, at least in the short run, one excludes belief system from empirical analysis and one forces oneself to return to (neo)realist premises. This is exemplified by Michael Dillon's analysis of the role of Thatcher's belief system at the time of the Falklands War<sup>16</sup>. Dillon's conclusion is that Thatcher's beliefs were a product of her environment and that they cannot therefore be used to explain that environment. I think that as long as it is possible to discern a time sequence with not too distant moments, it will be possible to detect changes in a belief system due to its environment and to measure the influence of the belief system on specific decision making situations. The so-called process tracing method serves exactly that purpose<sup>17</sup>. Having thus limited the boundaries of belief systems to the attributes of individual politicians, it becomes possible to introduce them as filter mechanisms in foreign policy decision making situations.

#### 4.3 How to identify cognitive belief systems

Steve Smith distinguishes between six approaches that have been used in the field of international politics to give an operational definition to the concept of belief system<sup>18</sup>:

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<sup>13</sup> Margot Light, 'Belief Systems and Soviet Foreign Policy', in Little and Smith (eds.), *ibid.*, pp. 109-126.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Fernando Claudin, The Communist Movement. From Comintern to Cominform. Part I: the crisis of the communist international. Part II: the zenith of stalinism, Monthly Review Press, New York and London, 1975; R.N. Berki, 'On Marxian Thought and the Problem of International Relations', *World Politics*, (24), 1, 1971, pp. 80-105.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara Allen Roberson, 'The Islamic Belief System', in Little and Smith (eds.), *ibid.*, pp. 85-108. Actually, Roberson seems to suggest an implicit theory of stability of Arab regimes.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Dillon, 'Thatcher and the Falklands', in Little and Smith (eds.), *ibid.*, pp. 167-189.

<sup>17</sup> See the introduction to part III of this study.

<sup>18</sup> Steve Smith, '.....', in Little and Smith (eds.), *ibid.*, pp. 17-27.

images, the openness of belief systems, historical analogies, the operational code, cognitive mapping, and Michael Brecher's research model. Unfortunately, Smith does not intensively discuss the problem of how these methods allow us to discover relationships between individual belief systems and the behaviour of nation-states. Moreover, Smith suggests that all six are independent research methods. I believe that this can be said of the operational code, cognitive mapping, and Brecher's model only. Images and historical analogies are at best elements of an individual's belief system, whereas the openness of a belief system refers to a hypothesis about the behaviour of individual politicians with a certain belief system rather than to an independent research strategy.

1. Images. The concept of images has been developed by Kenneth Boulding in the 1950s<sup>19</sup>. It entails the premise that decision makers act in accordance with the image they have formed of their adversaries and themselves. Boulding suggests that these stereotypical ideas about other nation-states find their origin in popular wisdom. One would expect the dynamics of international conflict to be affected by such ideas<sup>20</sup>. It has been shown that a negative image of one's adversary is often paralleled by a positive self-image<sup>21</sup>. Some authors go as far as claiming that in the age of television international politics has changed into a struggle for the shaping of images<sup>22</sup>. Few systematic studies of national self-image have so far been conducted<sup>23</sup>. Naomi Bailin Wish finds a correlation between the national role conceptions of political leaders and the foreign policy behaviour of their countries. For example, those who believed that their countries were influential and performed a leadership role, were more active on the international scene<sup>24</sup>. Unfortunately, images of one's adversary

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<sup>19</sup> Kenneth E. Boulding, The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1956.

<sup>20</sup> Ole R. Holsti, 'The Belief System and National Images: John Foster Dulles', in Ralph K. White (ed.), Psychology and the Prevention of Nuclear War, New York University Press, New York, pp. 322-323.

<sup>21</sup> Holsti, ibid., p. 328.

<sup>22</sup> Alpo Rusi, 'Image Research and Image Politics in International Relations. Transformation of Power Politics in the Television Age', Cooperation and Conflict, (23), 1988, pp. 29-42.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Michael Brecher, Blema Steinberg, and Janice Stein, 'A Framework for Research on Foreign Policy Behavior', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (13), 1, 1969 pp. 75-101; K.J. Holsti, 'National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy', International Studies Quarterly, (14), 1970, pp. 232-309; C. Jönsson and U. Westerlund, 'Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis', in Christer Jönsson (ed.), Cognitive Dynamics and International Politics, Frances Pinter, London, 1982, pp. 127-157.

<sup>24</sup> Naomi Bailin Wish, 'Foreign Policy Makers and their National Role Conceptions', International Studies Quarterly, (24), 4, 1980, pp. 532-554.

and oneself do not yet add up to a complete belief system: images undoubtedly are an important part of any belief system of foreign policy decision makers; they are a component of the operational code and of Brecher's model of analysis. They should, however, be supplied with ideas about history, international relations, and about the means available to a politician to implement his policy goals.

2. The openness of belief systems<sup>25</sup>. A belief system's openness refers to the extent to which decision makers are prepared to correct their cognitive ideas when new, contradictory, information is reaching them<sup>26</sup>. It has been found that foreign policy makers rarely readjust the images of their opponents, despite the availability of evidence that would justify such a correction<sup>27</sup>. It has been suggested that the preparedness to correct one's view of the world when confronted with new information is depending on the extent to which a politician's power is connected with his old, incorrect, ideas<sup>28</sup>. It will be clear from these considerations that the relative openness of belief system forms an interesting source of hypotheses about the behaviour of individuals with certain types of belief systems. It is nevertheless not correct to suggest that the concept of openness refers to an approach to identify belief systems.

3. Historical analogies. It has been very popular to point to role of historical analogies drawn by individual policy makers when dealing with an international problem. Recent work comes from Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, who set out to test their hypothesis that decisionmakers will make use of analogies with the past when trying to evaluate the problems they are currently confronted with<sup>29</sup>. Unfortunately, their prize winning book is concentrated on giving advice on the relevant use of historical analogies in decision making processes. Only a minor attempt to analyze under which conditions politicians prefer to rely on the past, is

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<sup>25</sup> The concept of openness seems rather contradictory. A belief system has to contain some measure of rigidity if it is to serve as filter mechanism at all. If a belief system is very open, it becomes irrelevant as a filter mechanism. In that case, it will become difficult to employ an individual's belief system as an independent variable. For an optimistic view on this problem, see Stuart and Starr's analysis of the operational codes of Henry Kissinger, John Kennedy, and John Foster Dulles; Douglas T. Stuart and Harvey Starr, 'The "Inherent Bad Faith Model" Revisited: Dulles, Kennedy and Kissinger', Political Psychology, (3), 3/4, 1981-1982, pp. 1-33, esp. 27-28.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Tetlock and McGuire, 'Cognitive Perspectives on Foreign Policy', pp. 256-258.

<sup>27</sup> Holsti, 'The Belief System and National Images', p. 328.

<sup>28</sup> R.H. Lieshout and Johan K. de Vree, 'How organizations decide. A systems-theoretic approach to the "behaviour" of organizations', Acta Politica, (20), 2, 1985, pp. 134-135.

<sup>29</sup> Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, Thinking in Time. The Uses of History for Decisionmakers, The Free Press, New York, 1986.



made when Neustadt and May allude to the possibility that historical analogies satisfy an impulse to action, and thus may give direction to the course of the decision making process<sup>30</sup>. A systematic study of the role of perceived parallels with past events is still lacking, despite important past contributions<sup>31</sup>. However, one should be aware that historical analogies are at best an element of an individual's belief system, but do not present a complete picture of an individual's cognitive ideas.

4. Operational Code. This basically entails a classification of an individual's cognitive ideas about history, international relations, power, opponents, and about the correct means to accomplish one's goals<sup>32</sup>. The most popular hypothesis deduced from the operational code construct predicts that in a decision making situation policy makers will be guided by their most central cognitive beliefs.

5. Cognitive Map. As opposed to the deductive classification of the operational code, the cognitive map of decision makers is obtained by induction. One observes which causal assertions a decision maker utters during a decision making situation. By utilizing grafentheory, it will be possible to discover an individual's value hierarchy, which serves as an important indicator of the considerations on which the final policy option is chosen.

6. Brecher's model of analysis. This research strategy, which elaborates the pioneering work of Harold and Margaret Sprout, is designed to portray the psychological and operational environment in which policy makers have to operate. The Brecher-model tries to estimate the relative influence of individual cognitive ideas and these environmental variables on the structure of the decision making process. The model stresses the importance of images and historical analogies as elements of individual belief systems.

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<sup>30</sup> Neustadt and May, *ibid.*, pp. 5, 32-33, 40-42.

<sup>31</sup> See, Ernest R. May, "Lessons" of the Past, Oxford University Press, New York, 1973; Hall Gardner, 'Averting World War III: Beyond the World War I, World War II Analogies', SAIS Review, (8), 2, pp. 121-136. The best systematic attempt is made by Thorne, who tries to connect the way politicians use their knowledge of history with processes of socialization and with personality factors, Christopher Thorne, 'International Relations and the Promptings of History', Review of International Studies, (9), 1983, pp. 123-135. For an attempt to measure the interrelationship between personality factors, socialization that generates dominant historical analogies, and individual attitudes towards cooperation and conflict, see Francis A. Beer, and others, 'War Cues and Foreign Policy Acts', American Political Science Review, (81), 3, 1987, pp. 701-716. A formalized model of the employment of historical analogies by policymakers can be found in Philip A. Schrodtt, 'Parallel Event Sequences in International Crises', Political Behavior, (12), 2, 1990, pp. 97-123.

<sup>32</sup> The classification was originally formulated by Alexander L. George, 'The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making', International Studies Quarterly, (13), 1969, pp. 190-122. It has been elaborated by Ole R. Holsti, '"Operational Code" Belief Systems: A Code-Book', Final Report to the National Science Foundation, 1976.

It has been shown that only three techniques exist that identify an individual's cognitive belief system. Other approaches are at best elements of these belief systems, or hypotheses that can be formulated about the behaviour of individuals with a certain type of belief system. In order to determine the appropriate technique for an understanding of British foreign policy during the 1956 Suez crisis, I will discuss the operational code, the cognitive map and the Brecher-model in the next sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

#### 4.3.1 Operational code versus cognitive mapping

The formulation of a cognitive map allows one to identify the structure of causal assertions a policy maker utters about a specific policy problem. With the help of grafen-theory complicated considerations are reduced to and schematically represented by the relationships a policy makers perceives to exist between policy goals and means<sup>33</sup>. Cognitive mapping clearly is an inductive technique. Relevant variables are not formulated beforehand, but should emerge from a decision maker's utterances at the decision making situation. By consequence, verbal accounts of decision making situations form the most relevant data, whereas very often one cannot find important considerations but in limited summaries of meetings. On the other hand, a cognitive map is supposed to indicate which considerations have led to a specific decision<sup>34</sup>.

Unlike the cognitive map, the operational code stresses the importance of a classification of cognitive ideas that might influence the formulation of foreign policy<sup>35</sup>. An operational code is formulated by looking at a politician's public and private declarations uttered until the moment of the decision making situation one is interested in. Once identified, an operational code will provide clues about the way a policy maker will define a problem, which policy options he will be open to, and how he will reach a decision.

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<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Robert Axelrod (ed.), The Structure of Decision. The Cognitive Maps of Political Elites, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1976; Daniel Heradstveit and G. Matthew Bonham, 'Decision making in the face of uncertainty: attributions of Norwegian and American officials', Journal of Peace Research, (23), 4, pp. 341-356; Daniel Heradstveit and Ove Narvesen, 'Psychological Constraints on Decision Making: A Discussion of Cognitive Approaches: Operational Code and Cognitive Map', Cooperation and Conflict, (13), 1978, pp. 77-92.

<sup>34</sup> Heradstveit and Narvesen, ibid., p. 87.

<sup>35</sup> George "The "Operational Code"; Alexander L. George, 'The causal nexus between cognitive beliefs and decision making behavior. The "Operational Code" construct', in L.S. Falkowski (ed.), Psychological Models in International Politics, Westview, Boulder, 1979, pp. 95-124.

Assumptions from cognitive psychology. Both the operational code and cognitive mapping are grounded in three theoretical premises of cognitive psychology. The first premise refers to the relative complexity of an individual's cognitive abilities. The second relates to an individual's tendency to maintain consistency in his belief system. The last assumption deals with bigger importance of some beliefs rather than others. Recently, these assumptions have been criticized for depicting man as rather passively responding to stimuli from his environment. New approaches tend to conceive of man as a much more active entity approaching the world in an almost scientific manner.

1. Complexity versus simplicity. It has been found that individuals, who demonstrate cognitive complexity in their view of the world, are better able to deal with unfamiliar situations, as they are better able to empathize, and thus anticipate the behaviour of, other individuals. Its relevance to the analysis of foreign policy making lies in the suggestion that a foreign policy maker will be able to consider a broad range of policy alternatives, when he has a differentiated view of his international environment<sup>36</sup>. The link between cognitive complexity and the quality of foreign policy decision making has been qualified over the last 15 years with the introduction of the occurrence of international crises and decision makers' experience in foreign affairs as intervening variables between individual characteristics and policy outcome. In a series of analyses of communication between nations during international crises it was found that, on the whole, those crises that eventually ended in armed conflict showed a reduction of cognitive complexity of both parties prior to the outbreak of hostilities, while those leading to a peaceful solution showed an increase in the cognitive complexity of the communications between the nation-states involved. Moreover, the latter scores for cognitive complexity were on the average significantly higher than the former<sup>37</sup>.

Integrative complexity is characterized by discrimination, differentiation, and integration. The first concept refers to an individual's ability to distinguish between stimuli. Differentiation implies his capacity to see various dimensions of one stimulus. Integration means that an individual can combine different stimuli and their dimensions into various interconnected schemes that serve as a filter of incoming information. Even though an

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<sup>36</sup> This is confirmed in, for instance, Bonham and Shapiro's simulation of a crisis in the Middle East, Michael J. Shapiro and G. Matthew Bonham, 'Cognitive Processes and Foreign Policy Decision Making', International Studies Quarterly, (17), 2, 1973, pp. 150-156.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Suedfield, Philip E. Tetlock, and Carmenza Ramirez, 'War, Peace, and Integrative Complexity. U.N. Speeches on the Middle East Problem, 1947-1976', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (21), 3, 1977, pp. 427-442; Peter Suedfield and Philip E. Tetlock, 'Integrative Complexity of Communications in International Crises', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (21), 1, 1977, pp. 169-184.

individual may be able to differentiate between dimensions, he need not be capable of integrating them into varied combinations<sup>38</sup>. The same methodology has been applied to an analysis of surprise attacks. It was found that the decision of the attacking party to terminate negotiations and to strike first was reflected by a reduction of the integrative complexity of his communications to the other party<sup>39</sup>.

Next, a politician's experience in foreign affairs was added as an intervening variable: because their curiosity was raised by Andrei Gromyko's performance in seven foreign policy crises, Wallace and Suedfield examined six politicians who served their country in foreign affairs over twenty years. The outcome, however, was inconclusive: only two leaders displayed increased integrative complexity, while the other four remained at the same level or even showed a reduction. Moreover, no significant increase in integrative complexity over the years could be found, which would have indicated the occurrence of learning effects from longevity in office. Learning, if it occurs at all, must have taken place before taking office. Equally plausible would be the explanation that high or low integrative complexity may depend on stable individual traits, rather than on learning<sup>40</sup>.

It is extremely important that research into integrative complexity contributes to the systematic gathering of data about international politics. Moreover, an important component of the process of information processing is captured by this technique. It should, however, be borne in mind that the exact place of integrative complexity in the decision making process remains rather unclear. The same is true for its contribution to the understanding of international politics. The main problem is whether decreasing integrative complexity is an indicator or a cause of deteriorating relations between nation-states<sup>41</sup>. The problem of separating dependent and independent variables in crises research is an old one that still needs to be resolved. It seems to me, however, that this can be done only if systematic analysis, such as the research on integrative complexity, is supplemented by historical case studies in which the decision making process is followed step by step, which would be the first prerequisite for

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<sup>38</sup> Suedfield, a.o., 'War, Peace, and Integrative Complexity', pp. 429-430; Suedfield and Tetlock, 'Integrative complexity of communications', pp. 170-171.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Suedfield and Susan Bluck, 'Changes in Integrative Complexity Prior to Surprise Attacks', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (32), 4, 1988, pp. 626-635.

<sup>40</sup> Michael D. Wallace and Peter Suedfield, 'Leadership Performance in Crisis: The Longevity-Complexity Link', International Studies Quarterly, (32), 1988, pp. 139-151.

<sup>41</sup> Suedfield and Tetlock mention this problem, 'Integrative Complexity of Communications', pp. 182-183.

a separation of independent and independent variables, by at least disconnecting them in time, if only because most international crises do not involve one decision only, such as to attack or not, but a series of often minor decisions, each possibly affected by and, on their turn, a potential cause of reduction of integrative complexity.

2. Tendency to maintain consistency. Man is supposed to display a strong tendency to see what he expects to see and to assimilate incoming information to previously formed ideas about the world. He thus maintains a balance in his view of the world. This phenomenon should not be considered necessarily irrational, distorted or closed-minded, because, starting from the axiom that no-one can process all stimuli that he encounters, one must have a mechanism of selection and organization. Consistency-seeking can become detrimental when the absorbing of new information does not logically follow from his pre-existing beliefs, or when the latter are not adequately grounded in experience or knowledge. If this is the case, consistency seeking may become detrimental to decision making<sup>42</sup>.

Consistency-seeking is closely connected with the issue of integrative complexity: a relatively complex cognitive style will help to avoid unsound striving for consistency, that is, not based on illogical methods. Similarly, a tendency to think in much more simple schemes, such as in times of international crises, coupled with one's natural tendency to seek consistency, may cause closed-mindedness.

3. The presence of master beliefs. Nevertheless, one still does not know where to look if one wants to anticipate the nature of a politician's closed-mindedness. Which ideas will he be likely to cling to? Which will be abandoned? A third assumption is needed in order to answer these questions. It is assumed that certain beliefs are more important than others, or that a cognitive belief system is characterized by a hierarchical structure<sup>43</sup>. An entire system of beliefs is structured around a so-called master belief. It is assumed that these beliefs will direct the acceptance and interpretation of new information.

These three assumptions of cognitive psychology have been the subject of much discussion lately. It has been argued that this view of man as a consistency seeker depicts him as an almost passive victim of previously formed ideas. Instead, man should be viewed as a 'problem solver', or 'naive scientist', who is eager and active to understand the origins of the behaviour of others. In that process of comprehension, he spontaneously thinks along similar

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<sup>42</sup> Jervis, Perception and misperception in international politics, chapter 4; Alexander L. George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy. The Effective Use of Information and Advice, Westview, Boulder, 1980, pp. 61-66.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Shapiro and Bonham, 'Cognitive Process and Foreign Policy Decision Making', pp. 156-159, who talk of a deductive structure.

lines as a scientist who approaches a problem<sup>44</sup>. In doing so, man is supposedly interested (1) in understanding the attributes of other actors (2) in understanding the causes of important events and (3) in predicting historical trends and the behaviour of other persons. Of course, man is not an experienced scientist, and his efforts are thus likely to fall prey to certain errors and biases. These are investigated by attribution theorists. Their most important findings relate to (a) the so-called fundamental attribution error, and (b) the reliance on so-called availability heuristics<sup>45</sup>.

(a) the fundamental attribution error. This refers to the tendency to put emphasis of situational factors when explaining one's own behaviour, while underlining dispositional variables when explaining the behaviour of others. In conflictual situations one tends to interpret the 'good' behaviour of one's opponent in terms of special circumstances which forces him to change behaviour. His 'normal, bad' behaviour is seen as stemming from his true, e.g. aggressive, characteristics<sup>46</sup>.

(b) 'availability heuristics'. Decision makers usually rely on low effort techniques for dealing with situations that pose a challenge to their organization. They often apply rules-of-thumb in order reach a decision. One of these is the tendency to judge a situation according to its availability, that is, the evoking of past experiences which the new situation appears to resemble. Decision makers are thus able to decide quickly without having to go through the motions of weighing the pros and cons of various alternatives, or even the effort to come up with alternatives in the first place<sup>47</sup>.

The paradigms of the cognitive miser and the naive scientist are not as far apart in their practical elaborations as is suggested by their proponents. The fundamental attribution error resembles the hypothesis of the relative closedmindedness of politicians with certain belief systems: the characteristic of John Foster Dulles's belief system, as measured by his

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<sup>44</sup> See for an overview of relevant literature from social psychology, George, Presidential Decisionmaking, p. 78, footnote 5. Christer Jönsson, 'A Cognitive Approach to International Negotiation', European Journal of Political Research, (11), 1983, p. 144.

<sup>45</sup> George, ibid., pp. 58-61.

<sup>46</sup> Examples of research are Heradstveit's study of the perceptions of Arab and Israeli opinion leaders, Daniel Heradstveit, The Arab Israeli conflict. Psychological Obstacles to Peace, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1981; John D. Fair, 'The Norwegian Campaign and Winston Churchill's Rise to Power in 1940. A Study of Perception and Attribution', The International History Review, (9), 3, 1987, pp. 410-437.

<sup>47</sup> George, Presidential Decisionmaking, pp. 60-61.

operational code<sup>48</sup>, displays this phenomenon, which has been labelled thereafter the 'inherent bad faith model'<sup>49</sup>. Exactly because attribution theorists analyze errors and biases of decision makers as a 'naive scientist', they get quite close again to the mechanism of cognitive consistency seeking<sup>50</sup>. Knowledge of cognitive psychology remains indispensable for the understanding of the way decision makers process large amounts of information in foreign policy making. The so-called information-processing paradigm recognizes thus both the filtering quality of previously developed beliefs and the capacity of individuals to appreciate the importance of discrepant information and to adopt an attitude of openness if present beliefs are challenged<sup>51</sup>. Belief systems, therefore, remain an important tool of the researcher, but he should not be entrapped in the suggestion that operational code, cognitive map, or Brecher-model provide definite predictive power<sup>52</sup>.

Both the operational code and the cognitive map are based on the three assumptions of cognitive psychology mentioned above. The idea that a master belief plays a central role in an individual's striving for consistency poses the question how to identify such a master belief. The operational code defines that belief to be of central importance that remains stable over time and from which other cognitive beliefs can be deducted. The cognitive map, however, as a tool which analyses an actual decision making situation, recognizes that belief as central that is connected with the highest number of causal assertions within the network of beliefs that a decisionmaker displays during that situation.

At face value, both approaches seem to complement each other, provided that the relevant data are available: one could formulate expectations about the stand a decision maker is likely to take, based on his operational code, which, it should be remembered, is based on

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<sup>48</sup> Ole R. Holsti 'The "Operational Code" Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: John Foster Dulles's Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs', Canadian Journal of Political Science, (3), 1, 1970, pp. 123-157.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Stuart and Starr, 'The inherent bad faith model reconsidered'.

<sup>50</sup> As a matter of fact, Tetlock and McGuire classify the fundamental attribution error under the category of aspects of man as a cognitive miser, Philip E. Tetlock and Charles B. McGuire, Jr., 'Cognitive Perspectives on Foreign Policy', in Ralph K. White (ed.), Psychology and the Prevention of Nuclear War. A Book of Readings, New York University Press, New York, 1986, pp. 264-266.

<sup>51</sup> George, Presidential decisionmaking, pp. 56-57.

<sup>52</sup> George warns against considering the operational code as 'a set of recipes or rules for action'. It should be seen as a prism which provides the actor with 'diagnostic' and 'choice propensities'; George, Presidential decisionmaking, p. 45.

material up until the decision making moment one is interested in. These expectations can then be tested with a cognitive map drawn up from the material that deals with the decision making situation directly. Unfortunately, this ideal situation will never occur due to serious methodological problems connected with the cognitive map approach.

Firstly, the master belief of an individual's cognitive map is found by counting the number of causal assertions that arrive at and depart from a cognitive belief. The belief which is connected with most other beliefs, is defined as the map's central or master belief. However, frequency can never be a sufficient or necessary condition for identifying a central belief, especially if it based on the sum of both positively and negatively loaded causal assertions. Secondly, existing cognitive map studies<sup>33</sup> show that in a representation of an individual's cognitive map instrumental variables tend to be overrepresented at the expense of goal variables. It is therefore unrealistic to claim that a cognitive map is able to calculate the rank order of a decision maker's actual preferences at the time of decision making<sup>34</sup>.

The operational code, however, is not free of methodological difficulties either. Master beliefs are detected by looking for an individual's most persistent beliefs over time. A comparative analysis of existing operational code studies shows that two types of operational codes exist, each organized around a different master belief: one type of belief system is centered around a policy maker's view of his principal opponent in world politics; a second group is structured around a policy maker's ideas about the nature of international politics<sup>35</sup>. However, it could well be the case that someone's belief system changes over time, if only

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<sup>33</sup> Examples are Axelrod, Structure of Decision; Jeffrey A. Hart, 'Cognitive Maps of Three Latin American Policy Makers', World Politics, (30), 1, 1977, pp. 115-140; Ariel Levi and Philip E. Tetlock, 'A Cognitive Analysis of Japan's 1941 Decision for War', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (24), 2, 1980, pp. 195-211; John Hamwee, and others, 'The Assumptions of British Nuclear Weapons Decision-makers', Journal of Peace Research, (27), 4, 1990, pp. 359-372.

<sup>34</sup> Axelrod's analysis of the cognitive map of a member of the Eastern Committee of the British Imperial War Committee suggests that the British ability to put pressure on the Persian Government is the map's master belief; however, without taking into account the concept of 'British utility', it remains impossible to understand any policy choice; Robert Axelrod, 'Decision for Neoimperialism: the Deliberations of the British Eastern Committee in 1918', in Axelrod, Structure of Decision, figure 4-2, pp. 88-89; Bonham and Shapiro's laboratory experiment with U.S. Middle East experts regarding a hypothetical Syrian invasion of Jordan, is an improvement as it offers several possible definitions of 'American utility'; however, the cognitive map of a Middle East specialist does not contribute to understanding policy choices because it cannot indicate which foreign policy goal is the most important one; Bonham and Shapiro, 'Explanation of the Unexpected. The Syrian Intervention in Jordan in 1970', in Axelrod, The Structure of Decision, figure 6-2, pp. 126-127. One should therefore be careful in employing the frequency criterion, because of its possible neglect of goal variables that might appear more central than sheer frequency suggests.

<sup>35</sup> Ole R. Holsti, 'A Typology of "Operational Code" Belief Systems', paper presented to the Conference on Approaches to Decision Making', Oslo, April 1977.



because learning takes place permanently during an individual's life-time: either gradually, because of an accumulation of experiences<sup>56</sup>, or suddenly after a dramatic event<sup>57</sup>.

Studies of Secretaries of State John Foster Dulles and Dean Acheson, and Senator Frank Church demonstrate that cognitive belief systems do change in the course of a political career<sup>58</sup>. Within the concept of the operational code this is not a real problem as long as a change of master beliefs is followed by a consistent change of other cognitive beliefs. Nevertheless, the explanatory value of the operational code may be severely limited when in principle the possibility exists that at the decision making situation the operational code is supposed to help understand, a politician radically changes his belief system. Despite this limitation the operational code is to be preferred to the cognitive map because the latter approach may not reveal master beliefs, and thus makes it much more difficult to formulate hypotheses about a politician's behaviour at decision making situations.

#### 4.3.2 Michael Brecher's model of analysis

In 1975 Michael Brecher initiated an ambitious research project, the International Crisis Behavior Project, which aims at the establishment of a set of empirical data in which one can find important characteristics of all international crises for the 1930-1980 period<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> See, e.g., Milton Rokeach, 'Inducing Change and Stability in Belief Systems and Personality Structures', Journal of Social Issues, (41), 1, 1985, esp. pp. 160-164.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Jimmy Carter's account of the anger the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provoked in him, and how this made him change his ideas about the nature of his opponent, James Carter, Keeping Faith. Memoirs of a President, Bantam, New York, 1982. Several analyses point to the coincidental, perfect timing of Carter's belief system change in accordance with changes in domestic public opinion: e.g., Thomas G. Hart, 'Perceiving "Afghanistan": Some Questions about the Applicability of Theoretical Insights in Analysing Perceptions in a Current Crisis', Jönsson, Cognitive Dynamics and International Politics, pp. 80-85. The sudden, radical change of a belief system because of an international event, or crisis, of course, contradicts the very hypothesis inherent to cognitive map and operational code: namely, that these events trigger, and are filtered into, existing beliefs. Little systematic research into this possibility has been done. It is implicitly borne out in e.g., Christopher New, Perceptions of China: The Influence of Expatriate Attitudes on British and American Foreign Policy Towards China, 1925-37, M.A. Thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, Bologna, 1986.

<sup>58</sup> Holsti, 'The "Operational Code" Approach to the Study of Political leaders', pp. 126, 129-132, David S. McLellan, 'The "Operational Code" Approach to the Study of Political Leaders: Dean Acheson's Philosophical and Instrumental Beliefs', Canadian Journal of Political Science, (4), 1, 1971, pp. 52-75; Loch K. Johnston, 'Operational Codes and the Prediction of Leadership Behavior: Senator Frank Church at Midcareer', in Margaret G. Hermann and Thomas W. Milburn (eds.), A Psychological Examination of Political leaders, The Free Press, New York, 1977, pp. 80-119.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Brecher, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Sheila Moser, Crises in the Twentieth Century. Volume I: Handbook of International Crises; Volume II: Handbook of Foreign Policy Crises, Pergamon Press, 1988.

Next, Brecher intends to complement this set of data with 25 qualitative case studies of international crises<sup>60</sup>, making use of his own model of analysis<sup>61</sup>. His research strategy attempts to measure the influence of a decision maker's operational and psychological environment on his policy decisions. Simplifying Brecher's work, one could say that his method of analysis prescribes four steps:

(1) A division of the case into a pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis period. In order to make such a distinction, a crisis is defined as a situation during which policy makers perceive, first, a threat to fundamental values, second, a high probability of the occurrence of military action, and third, a limited amount of available time. The start of both pre-crisis and crisis is recognizable because of certain symbolic events.

(2) A description of the psychological environment. Brecher distinguishes between the attitudinal prism and images. The former refers to the government's general orientation to international politics, one's place therein, and one's opponent. The latter regards the more immediate ideas of the relevant policy makers.

(3) A search for crucial decisions taken during the crisis and for information that can shed light on the decision making process.

(4) An attempt to answer the research questions that are the core of the Brecher model, and that form the basis of its comparative value. Its central question discusses the influence of increasing stress on four aspects of the decision making process, that is, the processing of information, the consulting of experts outside the decision making unit, size and structure of the decision making unit(s), and, lastly, open-mindedness towards alternative options. Changes in the level of stress is measured by changes in the perception of threats, available time, and the probability of the use of military force.

All case studies employing the Brecher model of analysis try to test the hypothesis that an increase in emotional stress will reduce the quality of the decision making process: the locus of decisionmaking will contain a reduced number of participants at an ever higher level.

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<sup>60</sup> Five case studies have so far been conducted: Michael Brecher, with Benjamin Geist, Decisions in Crisis: Israel, 1967 and 1973, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1980; Karen Dawiska, The Kremlin and the Prague Spring: Decisions in Crisis, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984; Alan Dowty, Middle East Crisis: U.S. Decision Making in 1958, 1970, and 1973, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984; Geoffrey Jukes, Hitler's Stalingrad Decisions, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985; Avi Shlaim, The United States and the Berlin Blockade 1948-1949. A Study in Crisis Decision Making, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983. For a review of these case studies, see J.L. Richardson, 'New Insights on International Crises', Review of International Studies, (14), 4, pp. 309-316.

<sup>61</sup> Brecher, Steinberg, and Stein, 'A framework for research on foreign policy behavior'.

Decision makers will isolate themselves from outside experts and will be guided by their ideas about their opponent and international politics in general.

Brecher's model of analysis is an important attempt at linking individual cognitive beliefs to decision making processes during international crises. Unfortunately, the research design presents a rather limited classification of cognitive ideas, in which instrumental beliefs, that discuss proper means and timing of action, are lacking. Moreover, the vague notion of the attitudinal prism supplements more detailed, individual, images, but the precise link between these variables remains unclear. It will be shown that this hampers empirical research aimed at the exact role of individual cognitive beliefs.

#### 4.4 The behaviour of nation-states and belief systems

Until now the most important question has still been circumvented: why would we need individual belief systems if we want to explain the behaviour of nation-states ? In this section I will show that individual cognitive belief systems may be helpful, and sometimes indispensable indeed, if one wants to explain international politics at the level of the nation-state, and even at the level of the international system. At the same time, the relative usefulness of Brecher-model and operational code will be illustrated.

##### 4.4.1 The link between belief systems and international politics: the Brecher-model

In his study of the Russian blockade of West Berlin from 24 June 1948 to 5 May 1949 Avi Shlaim tries to apply the Brecher-model to processes of crisis decision making. His main conclusion is that an increase of emotional stress among American policy makers resulted in higher quality foreign policy decisions<sup>62</sup>. For the purpose of this study at this moment attention should be paid to the relation between belief systems and international politics<sup>63</sup>.

The crisis period starts when at 24 June 1948 the Soviet Union closes off all connections over land with West Berlin. The pre-crisis, however, had set in at 20 March 1948 when Marshall Sokolowski walked out on the Allied Control Council as a protest against the

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<sup>62</sup> In his comparative analysis of five 'Brecher'-studies, Richardson observes that all cases display this quality. He thus concludes that the traditional hypotheses that increased stress hampers effective decision making should be revised, Richardson, 'New Insights on International Crises', pp. 311-315.

<sup>63</sup> Shlaim's study was chosen because his contribution to the collection of essays edited by Little and Smith explicitly deals with the role of President Truman's cognitive belief system during the Berlin Blockade crisis, Shlaim, 'Truman's Belief System: Russia and the Berlin Blockade', in Little and Smith (eds.), Belief Systems and International Relations, pp. 227-241.

Western attitude towards reunification of the occupied zones. The end of the crisis-situation, and the beginning of the post-crisis situation, is characterized by the Truman Administration's decision at 27 July 1948 not to escalate the conflict, but to wait and see and to meanwhile continue operating the air lift that had been improvised in April, but had become operative on a large scale on 26 June 1948. The post-crisis situation would last until 5 May 1949 when the Russians removed their blockade<sup>64</sup>.

The next step is to describe the images of key decision makers, President Truman, Secretary of State Marshall, and the Head of the American occupation zone in Germany, General Clay, as well as the attitudinal prism over the American Government<sup>65</sup>. Unfortunately, Shlaim does not deal with the problem of the interrelationship between images and attitudinal prism. He concentrates on the perception of the opponent: crucial is the pessimistic view of the Soviet Union and its intentions in world politics, coupled with the conviction that the United States should take the lead in stopping Soviet expansionism. Berlin was interpreted as a test-case: it was considered the last opportunity to make it clear to Moscow that further aggression would not be tolerated. This image would determine the American attitude during the crisis<sup>66</sup>.

A methodological problem is created by the almost perfect coincidence of the individual images of Truman, Marshall, and Clay with attitudinal prism of the American Government<sup>67</sup>. It could thus be claimed that it would have sufficed to examine Governmental declarations instead of reconstructing the images of key decision makers: belief systems do not seem to add to an understanding of the crisis. This presumed irrelevance of belief systems is caused, on the one hand, by the little attention the Brecher-model pays to the difference between individual images and governmental prisms, and, on the other hand, by the inaccurate analysis of two key decisions. The decision to stay in Berlin, despite the accepted impossibility to defend West Berlin if the Soviets were to press on, can be understood only if somehow individual belief systems are taken into account: it was Truman's decision on the basis of a consideration that was by no means shared by the State Department or the Pentagon. Similarly, the decision not to escalate to conflict, but to continue the air-lift, is only explicable if reference is made to the category of instrumental beliefs. Shlaim indicates that U.S. key

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<sup>64</sup> Shlaim, United States and the Berlin Blockade, pp. 43, 171, 283.

<sup>65</sup> Shlaim, ibid., pp. 84-109.

<sup>66</sup> Shlaim, ibid., pp. 109-115.

decision makers perceived three options: to withdraw from Berlin, to challenge Russian resolve by sending a military train through the Corridor to West Berlin, or to set up an air-lift<sup>68</sup>. An explanation of the decision not to escalate should be looked for among decision makers' instrumental beliefs about appropriate means and timing. These beliefs are lacking in a vague categorizing of belief systems such as in the Brecher-model. They can be found, however, in the operational code.

Nevertheless, the important point is that the imprecise components of attitudinal prism and individual images make it more difficult to indicate the precise relevance of cognitive belief systems for an understanding of American foreign policy at the time of the Berlin blockade. Two crucial choices, however, cannot be explained unless individual cognitive beliefs are taken into account.

#### 4.4.2 The link between belief systems and international politics: the usefulness of the operational code

An important example of an operational code study that tries to investigate into the relation between cognitive beliefs and international politics is Harvey Starr's study of Henry Kissinger's belief system and U.S. foreign policy at the beginning of the 1970s<sup>69</sup>. Starr first formulates Kissinger's operational code by examining his academic publications until the moment of his appointment as President Nixon's National Security Adviser in 1968. Next, Kissinger's cognitive beliefs are compared with his public utterances on the Soviet Union and China in that function, and, from September 1973, as Secretary of State.

The notion of an international status quo that can be threatened by so-called revolutionary states at any time, is central to Kissinger's operational code. International politics is predictable as long as no revolutionary state threatens the status quo. Under those circumstances negotiations are the best tool for a statesmen to accomplish his goals, basing himself on the predictable behaviour of other states. When the legitimate international order is threatened, however, military conflict becomes a legitimate means of preserving or restoring the status quo<sup>70</sup>.

Starr subsequently analyzes Kissinger's perceptions of China and the Soviet Union for the 1971-1976 period, employing Evaluation Assertion Analysis, a quantitative research

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<sup>68</sup> Shlaim, 'Truman's Belief System: Russia and the Berlin Blockade', pp. 239-240.

<sup>69</sup> Harvey Starr, Henry Kissinger. Perceptions of International Politics, The University of Kentucky Press, Lexington, 1984.

<sup>70</sup> Starr, ibid., pp. 44-73.

technique, that was developed by the psychologist Charles Osgood. Over 600 public statements of Kissinger are categorized on four dimensions: his perception of Chinese and Soviet hostility, of their power, of their success, and his overall appreciation of these two countries<sup>71</sup>. It is thus possible to characterize Kissinger's belief system as relatively open: his evaluation of the Soviet Union and China depends on their foreign policy. He does not consider them to be inherently aggressive or peace-loving. He judges them according to his criterion of whether the international status quo is threatened by their foreign policies; a negative image of the Soviet Union is developed only when she starts interfering with developments in Angola and the Horn of Africa in 1975 and 1976<sup>72</sup>.

In order to answer the question whether Kissinger's cognitive beliefs are a necessary tool for understanding American foreign policy towards China and the Soviet Union, Starr compares the dynamics of Kissinger's perceptions with the scores of American foreign policy towards both countries on the intensity of conflict-scale, developed by Edward Azar and Thomas Sloan<sup>73</sup>. Starr's hypothesis that an improvement in Kissinger's evaluation of the Soviet Union and China will be followed by a more positive attitude of the American Government (and reversely), is falsified<sup>74</sup>. Starr concludes therefore that belief systems cannot be a sufficient, but at best a necessary, condition for the explanation of U.S. foreign policy.

Starr should be praised for his methodological precision. He distinguished between the sources on which he based Kissinger's operational code and the data that served his analysis of Kissinger's perceptions as a foreign policy maker. The separation of dependent and independent variables is not always respected in studies of cognitive ideas and international politics<sup>75</sup>. He seems to have adopted Alexander George's process-tracing-method that should be followed if one wants understand the relation between beliefs and behaviour: the decision making process should be followed step by step; at each step it should be checked whether and

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<sup>71</sup> Starr, ibid., pp. 83-86.

<sup>72</sup> Starr, ibid., pp. 75-122; cf. Stuart and Starr, 'The "Inherent Bad Faith Model" Revisited'.

<sup>73</sup> Starr, ibid., pp. 126-128; the data come from their Conflict and Peace Data Bank.

<sup>74</sup> Starr, ibid., pp. 128-142.

<sup>75</sup> For instance, White's and Shlaim's contributions to the book edited by Little and Smith use sources that appeared after the event that should be explained in order to construct beliefs that are supposed to predict behaviour at the event.

how cognitive beliefs select, and guide the interpretation of, incoming information, suggest or exclude alternative options, and thus implicitly structure the decision<sup>76</sup>.

Starr seems to have made a distinction between different relevant periods in order to compare fluctuations in perceptions with fluctuations in policies, but, according to me, has made an important mistake. He has implicitly concluded that Kissinger's view of the opponent, i.e. China and the Soviet Union, forms his master belief, and thus his most important sense of direction for formulating foreign policy. His own analysis, however, bears out, according to me, that the nature of international politics better qualifies as Kissinger's master belief: international order can in danger at any moment by a state attempting to change the status quo. This determines the best way to approach an opponent. In comparing Kissinger's perception to American foreign policy, Starr should not have limited his analysis to the 1972-4 period, but should have added a period during which the Soviet Union and China threatened the international status quo. Real congruence between Kissinger's belief and American policy would be expected to be found in a policy change after a perception change in terms of the master belief. Such a drastic change seems to have occurred in 1975-6, when the Soviet Union was challenging the international status quo with her African policies. This should then explain Kissinger's and America's much tougher attitude towards the Soviet Union in those years.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

First, individual belief systems can contribute considerably to explanations of international politics, provided that research problems are formulated in the following terms: 'can outcome Y be understood without reference to the cognitive beliefs of X?'<sup>77</sup>. The Brecher-model and the operational code are potentially very useful for the evaluation of the role of cognitive belief systems and decision making processes. The case studies discussed above show two very important points:

(1) Sometimes foreign policy cannot be understood unless individual cognitive beliefs are introduced: the decision to stay in a defenseless Berlin in 1948 and not to escalate the conflict cannot be understood with (neo)realist tools alone, and have to be seen in light of Truman's, Marshall's and Clay's individual belief systems.

(2) Cognitive belief systems may be a variable that links different levels of analysis in the study of international relations. Kissinger's perception of a change in the nature of the

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<sup>76</sup> George, 'The "causal nexus"', pp. 106-107.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. George, 'The "causal nexus"'.

international system explains America's hard line towards the Soviet Union. If the nature of the international system is an important master belief within the belief systems of foreign policy makers, then an analysis of those systems may contribute to an explanation of the interaction between, on the one hand, so-called 'hard data' on the position of nation-states in the international system and, on the other hand, the way politicians perceive these 'hard data' and act upon them. Thus one could be one step closer to making use of the insights from both (neo)realist theory and different approaches to international relations, such as decision making.

Second, Starr's analysis demonstrates that cognitive psychology can be useful not only in the rather limited area of international crisis decision making, but as well when more long-term policies are concerned.

Third, both the operational code and the Brecher-model have made it abundantly clear that it is important to be absolutely clear about one's research question. Certain decisions should be the center of attention to which cognitive beliefs should be attached.



## Chapter 5: Review of alternative approaches

### 5.1 Introductory remarks

An analysis on the basis of cognitive belief systems not only has to prove its usefulness in competition with neorealism<sup>1</sup>. It also has to confront the claim that the perceptions and expectations of the foreign policy makers can be better accounted for by other variables than individual cognitive beliefs. Three types of variables can be distinguished. First, variables that are related to the individual decisionmaker, other than his cognitive belief system. Second, variables that belong to the institutional setting that foreign policymakers operate in. Third, a factor that takes account of the condition that major foreign policy decisions are often taken in small groups. This chapter discusses the former two types of variables, while chapter 6 will deal with small group dynamics.

### 5.2 Individual variables, other than cognitive beliefs

Generally, two types of argument could be brought against the use of individual belief systems for the understanding of international politics. The first type points to individual characteristics that lie beyond the reach of cognitive beliefs and that would make them superfluous. People who consider the physical condition of leaders an important element of their functioning actually claim that, under certain conditions, idiosyncratic characteristics of foreign policy makers may explain their behaviour. The physical malfunctioning of individuals makes them act differently from how one would reasonably expect them to act. For the neorealist this would mean that he can freely admit that in exceptional cases individuals are important, because of an individual's physical condition, but, on the whole, individuals act within terms of the security dilemma.

The second type of argument denies a central place to individual belief systems. Writers in this school argue that individual beliefs are the product of deeper-lying motivations which form part of someone's character-structure. By implication, it would be much more efficient to try to establish a link between foreign policy making and individual character or motivations.

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<sup>1</sup> For a neorealist, the individual does not constitute an independent variable that contributes to the explanation of international politics. The individual that participates in international affairs is thus considered an exponent of the nation-state he or she belongs to; cf. Martin Hollis's discussion of "plastic man", Models of Man. Philosophical Thoughts on Social Action, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, pp. 3-9.

### 5.2.1 Physical condition

Little research has as yet been conducted on the relationship between fitness and political performance<sup>2</sup>. Vaguely, the conviction is getting hold that politicians need a certain amount of stamina, if they want to be successful in politics. Much has been made of the perseverance of European Commissioner Sicco Mansholt at the common agricultural policy negotiations: he would use his role as a chairman to continue discussion well into the night persuading his colleagues to adopt his proposals after prolonged discussions had exhausted them completely. Similar heroic views exist of Sir Winston Churchill's physical endurance during the Second World War. However, Churchill's leadership became a subject of scepticism after he had suffered from a stroke in 1953.

Unfortunately, little is known about the real impact of certain physical disabilities on political performance. Robertson attempts to describe the potential implications of fatigue, illness, and the use of drugs, by presenting short case studies of Adolf Hitler, John Kennedy, and Anthony Eden. His analysis, however, remains inconclusive<sup>3</sup>.

The case of Anthony Eden, of course, is extremely relevant for the purposes of this study. Some people dismiss Suez as the product of a madman<sup>4</sup>, but, British sensitivities apart, if Eden's physical or mental health can be proven to have been of importance during Suez, it would have serious consequences for this study. The present analysis started from the idea that it would be interesting to scrutinize a case which seems so easily explicable in neorealist terms as a logical consequence of the change from a multipolar to a bipolar world, from the point of view of individual cognitive factors. To find that Suez could be explained by a physical problem of Sir Anthony Eden would in itself be a point in case, but could easily be wavered by neorealists with their claim that physical factors are idiosyncratic that indeed do occur occasionally, but which do not undermine neorealist theory as such.

The case of Sir Anthony Eden. It is well-known that Eden suffered from a badly executed bile-conduct operation in 1953, which required another operation in the United States in order to save his life. It is public knowledge too that because of the effects of the first

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<sup>2</sup> Jean Blondel, Political Leadership, Towards a General Analysis, SAGE, London, 1987, pp. 131-133, discusses the importance of physical energy as a condition of becoming a successful political leader.

<sup>3</sup> Jonathan M. Roberts, Decision-Making during International Crises, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1988, pp. 181-206.

<sup>4</sup> Even some close observers of the decision-making process at the time had their doubts: 'it seems to me that the PM is mad, literally mad', William Clark, 'Whitehall Diary', Bodleian Library, Oxford, entry 4-5 November 1956, p. 158.

operation, Eden would occasionally suffer from sudden fevers accompanied by emotional reactions, like anger, irritability, and anxiety. Eden took medicine to suppress these consequences, but, unless his medical files will become public, the exact state of his physical health, or the psychological consequences of his treatment, will remain unknown. It is therefore unsound to simply claim that at the time of Suez Eden was mentally unfit to deal with the situation. All important policy crises produce anxiety and may thus influence the decision making process; the very fact that crises produce emotional stress is the rationale of applying social-psychological approaches to the study of international politics. It seems therefore an exaggeration to put Eden immediately into the category of 'madman' cases, when it is save to presume that probably most participants at the meetings of the Cabinet Committee that took the major decisions, will have experienced a reduction of their cognitive abilities and emotional stability.

Moreover, we know that Eden had experienced these fevers regularly since 1953, yet we usually judge his diplomatic performances of 1954 as among his finest<sup>5</sup>. It is too easy, and for many former participants at Suez convenient to describe Eden as mentally weak, because it removes part of the responsibility from themselves. An example of the latter is McDermott's constant use of descriptions like 'he worked in a sort of frenzy which sometimes touched hysteria'<sup>6</sup>.

The records give three clues to moments at which Eden was indeed suffering from his weak physical health. At the beginning of October 1956 Eden wrote to Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, who was at that time engaged in negotiations with Egypt at the United Nations in New York, that he had 'been struck down by a tiresome virus with a high temperature, [that he] hope[d] to be about again in a day or two', and let him know the next day that the temperature had turned normal again<sup>7</sup>. Actually, that very day, when visiting his wife, who was in hospital because of a miscarriage, Eden fell ill again and had to stay at the hospital. On 9 October 1956 Eden tells Lloyd that the temperature had been 105 degrees Fahrenheit at its

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Rhodes James, Anthony Eden, p. 393; David Carlton, Anthony Eden, p. 367, however, claims 1955 to be Eden's annus mirabilis.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey McDermott, The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy, Leslie Frewin, London, 1969, p. 132. McDermott was one of three Foreign Office officials who initially were kept informed of all developments at the time of the crisis. McDermott was excluded from such privilege by August 1956, however. The other two were Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick and Patrick Dean.

<sup>7</sup> Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Public Record Office, FO 800/741, Eden to Lloyd (at UN), Telegram 1063, 6 October 1956; Telegram 1070, 7 October 1956.

height<sup>8</sup>. The important point is that this date of physical and, presumably, mental weakness cannot be connected to any crucial decision. It occurred after the crucial day that Dulles made his notorious anti-colonialist speech (2 October 1956), which, it will be argued, was the definite incident that persuaded the British to go it alone without consulting the Americans. Similarly, Eden was back in good shape by 13 October 1956 when General Maurice Challe secretly flew from Paris to London to suggest an Anglo-French intervention in case of an Israeli attack.

Another case of 105 degrees Fahrenheit occurred on 4 November 1956, when the United Nations General Assembly condemned the Anglo-French ultimatum to Egypt and Israel with a vote of 64 to 5<sup>9</sup>: it happened in coincidence with the vote at the UN, and thus may have been caused by it, or may itself have caused another blow to Eden's health; moreover, it coincided with an important Cabinet meeting. However, as will be discussed in detail in chapter 10, there is no trace of an attempt by Eden to impose a decision on the Cabinet. Actually, the die had already been cast two days before, when the so-called Egypt Committee decided to go ahead with the invasion. On November 4th, Eden's presumed anxiety about the UN-vote may have stiffened his attitude, but it does not explain the full Cabinet's decision to insist on the military operation.

A last example of Eden's bad health at the time of Suez can be reconstructed only with some difficulty. In his biography of Eden, James quotes Eden's diary as mentioning 'physical pain' on Tuesday 21 August 1956<sup>10</sup>. On the next day, however, Eden is apparently examined by his doctor, Dr. Kling, who declares him to be in good health: 'it was really all a matter of nerves'<sup>11</sup>. We know, from a letter by V.E. Key to the Secretary of State for War, Anthony Head, that on the day of Eden's pains a small group of ministers thought it a good thing to take some provocative action against Egypt<sup>12</sup>. The third week of August was a critical week indeed, because the London conference was about to come to an end, and it was not clear what the British attitude should be if the Conference was to reach a conclusion that would not satisfy British demands. This is therefore a situation in which the point could be made that Eden's

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<sup>8</sup> Selwyn Lloyd Papers, PRO, FO 800/741, Eden to Lloyd (at UN), Telegram 1086, 9 October 1956.

<sup>9</sup> William Clark diary, entry 4/5 November 1956, p. 158.

<sup>10</sup> James, *Anthony Eden*, p. 523.

<sup>11</sup> William Clark diary, entry 22 August 1956, p. 117.

<sup>12</sup> Key to Head, 21 August 1956, Public Record Office WO 32/16709 DUS(A)/BM/425; cf. Selwyn Lloyd's diary of engagements for August 1956; FO 800/714.

physical suffering may have influenced his stand at the Ministerial meeting at 11.15 A.M., just before the Cabinet meeting of 11.30, although we do not know when his pains actually set in.

It is rather difficult to establish a connection between physical health, emotional stability, and performance at decision making situations on the basis of the primary sources presently available. It seems, however, that the occasions at which such a relationship could have been possible do not prove a strong nexus: first of all, because no crucial decision was taken under such known circumstances, and second, because at no stage was action taken by an ill Eden on his own. On every occasion, several colleagues took part in the decision making process. No decision can thus be explained by illness alone, but has to be supplemented by, at least, an analysis of group dynamics.

### 5.2.2 Personality

The term personality suggests that an individual will display certain stable elements that underlie and guide many of his actions and reactions, both emotional and intellectual. Although much disagreement exists about the concept of personality, and about the question whether personality is an individual characteristic, or a construct of researchers put on top of individuals, many studies have been undertaken to identify components of the personalities of politicians<sup>13</sup>. For the study of foreign policy, the question whether some personal characteristics are more prevalent than others among members of the foreign policy elite, seems quite relevant. Unfortunately, very few studies in political science, and in international relations in particular, have tried to assess the link between personality and foreign policy decision making.

Basically, two types of arguments can be made. First, it is possible that a cognitive belief system is itself a product of an individual's motivational structure: cognitive beliefs must find their origins somewhere<sup>14</sup>. The idea is that early childhood socialization leads to the acquisition by the individual of dominant motives. Later in life, he tends to develop a political belief system compatible with his specific motivational structure<sup>15</sup>. Second, it may be the case that an individual's motivational structure will determine his response to an external stimulus, independent of his cognitive belief system. In either case, the cognitive belief system is no longer a relevant factor.

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<sup>13</sup> This section draws heavily from Blondel, Political Leadership, pp. 128-136.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Fred I. Greenstein, Personality and Politics, Markham, Chicago, 1969, pp. 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Stephen Walker, 'The Motivational Foundations of Political Belief Systems: A Re-Analysis of the Operational Code Construct', International Studies Quarterly, (27), 1983, p. 189.

Both visions suggest that a politician will project (or needs to project) his deeper drives, his motives, into some project, the accomplishment of which provides a relief from his inner tensions. Usually, a distinction is made between three types of motivation that direct political behaviour: the need for power, the need for affiliation, and the need for achievement<sup>16</sup>. In the psychological study of politics the most popular version of this theory proposes that certain individual politicians will, first of all, search for the enlargement of their personal power in order to compensate for negative feelings of low self-esteem<sup>17</sup>.

Alexander and Juliette George's study of Woodrow Wilson's performance as a President of Princeton University, as Governor of New Jersey, and of President of the United States is an example of a useful application of this hypothesis to empirical analysis<sup>18</sup>. They show how Wilson's career displayed a regular pattern in which dramatic accomplishments shortly after taking office, were followed by a period of contention and controversy, and eventually resulted in a defeat under circumstances that offered ample possibilities for success. The Georges demonstrate how ego-defence mechanisms, that were related to Wilson's need for power, furthered his extreme unwillingness to compromise<sup>19</sup>.

Lebow's comparative analysis of the outbreak of World War One, the 1950 decision to extend the Korean War to North Korea, and the 1962 Sino-Indian war, suggests that explanations of foreign policy making based on motivational structure are more comprehensive than those that make use of belief systems<sup>20</sup>.

However, the relationship between motivational structure, cognitive belief system, and political behaviour may be too complicated to allow for a clear distinction: Walker and Falkowski argue that it is too simple to suggest that cognitive beliefs need not be examined. According to them, environmental stimuli, such as a political crisis, can lead to two different, though interrelated processes: on the one hand, a politician's personal needs (power, affiliation,

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<sup>16</sup> Walker, 'The Motivational Foundations' p. 187.

<sup>17</sup> The relevance of the need to compensate for low self-esteem to the study of politics was first discussed by Harold Lasswell, in his *Power and Personality*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1948; Lasswell's hypothesis has been developed by Alexander George, 'Power as a Compensatory Value', *Journal of Social Issues*, (24), 3, 1968, pp. 29-49; see also, Tom Brydar, 'A Preface to the Psychological Study of Political Leaders', mimeo, Göteborg, 1982, pp. 20-22.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: a Personality Study*, Dover Press, New York, 1956.

<sup>19</sup> As discussed in Greenstein, *Personality and Politics*, pp. 73-86.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War. The Nature of International Crisis*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1981, chapters 5 and 6, esp. pp. 102-111, 222-228.

achievement), are aroused as the individual uses his cognitive belief system to interpret and cope with the new situation. Cognitive beliefs are therefore expected to have some independent influence, e.g. through emotional reactions. On the other hand, these aroused motives, may contribute to the cognitive rigidity of the politician's belief system and may thus account for his handling of the situation<sup>21</sup>. Beliefs and motives do not exclude each other: 'motives as enhancing the impact of beliefs upon behavior rather than competing with beliefs for influence over behavior'<sup>22</sup>.

This suggests that first reactions to an external threat can be extremely important, and may be caused by motivational structure. This is the conclusion of Thomas Mongar's study of John Kennedy's role during four foreign policy crises<sup>23</sup>. Morgan stresses the importance of initial reactions to a new situation. He labels the situation in which the decision maker is convinced that he has struck a bargain with one's opponent, which is suddenly not respected any longer, the 'abrogation syndrome'. This may provoke feelings of anger which may then direct immediate decisions. This supposedly explains why Kennedy, when he first heard of the Soviet missile base on Cuban soil, became very angry, and took the most important decision within the course of two minutes, namely, to have those missiles removed<sup>24</sup>.

In political science two important attempts have been made to do empirical research into the link between the personality of individuals and their political behaviour. James David Barber tries to give a comparative analysis of American Presidents since Woodrow Wilson, while Lloyd Etheridge and Graham Shepard focus on policy conflicts between leading figures in the American foreign policy elite since the beginning of this century. An analysis of their approaches will show that cognitive beliefs remain an indispensable tool for the study of foreign policy, even if personality factors are taken into account.

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Walker and Lawrence S. Falkowski, 'The Operational Codes of U.S. Presidents and Secretaries of State: Motivational Foundations and Behavioral Consequences', Political Psychology, 1984, p. 243.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen G. Walker, 'The Motivational Foundations of Political Belief Systems: A Re-Analysis of the Operational Code Construct', p. 189.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Mongar, 'Personality and Decision Making. John F. Kennedy in Four Crisis Decisions', Canadian Journal of Political Science, (2), 2, 1969, pp. 200-225.

<sup>24</sup> Mongar, 'Personality and Decision making', p. ?

(A) James Barber and the Presidential character

To Barber the crucial difference in the performance of American presidents can be anticipated in an understanding of character, world view, and style<sup>25</sup>. Character is defined as the way a President orients himself towards life. Worldview relates to his primary political beliefs. Style is the expression of elements like rhetoric, personal relations and the attitude towards 'homework'. Barber's approach relies to a large extent on theories of personality development: character is formed in childhood, worldview during adolescence, and style in early adulthood.

Barber succeeds in formulating a very parsimonious measurement of the Presidential character by making use of a two variables typology. He simply asks whether a President is active, and whether he enjoys political life<sup>26</sup>. Thus he is able to construct a typology of Presidential character: American Presidents can be classified as Active-Positive, Active-Negative, Passive-Positive, or Passive-Negative. It is Barber's contention that each Presidential type displays particular characteristics which bear specific dangers to his performance at the White House.

It is to Barber's credit that he is able to predict to a certain type of President will approach a policy problem in a certain way. For example, he expects an Active-Negative President to be predominantly interested in his own power position, when weighing several policy alternatives. Unfortunately, however, Barber cannot tell when this is more likely to happen, neither along which lines a President's character may cause problems, when applied to a specific case.

Alexander George observes that Barber puts too much emphasis on the explanatory weight of character, and pays relatively little attention to the other variables that he distinguished: world view and style. By consequence, Barber neglects that better explanations can sometimes be given, if a President's world view is taken into consideration, as in the case the way Herbert Hoover handled the Great Depression in the early 1930s<sup>27</sup>.

As a matter of fact, Barber has operationalised his concept of worldview in a rather limited way: it amounts to 'primary political beliefs', that encompass ideas about causality, human nature and moral conflict. Nowhere in his study does Barber explicitly make use of

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<sup>25</sup> But all three factors should be related to the power situation in which a President has to operate, as well as to the national climate of expectations that is surrounding him.

<sup>26</sup> Barber thus is one of the few political scientists engaged in empirical research into what Blondel labelled the energy factor of political leadership. See footnote 2.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander L. George, 'Assessing Presidential Character', World Politics, 1974, pp. 255 ff.



worldview as an independent variable. This is unfortunate, because Barber's analysis thus remains a rather general one, while attention to worldview and style could have evidenced propensities of choice in decision making situations<sup>28</sup>.

Character may thus provide some additional insight into the way top level politicians will define and approach a problem, but it can never give a satisfactory understanding, unless cognitive beliefs are invoked as an independent variable<sup>29</sup>.

#### (B) Interpersonal style studies

Some psychological studies suggest that motivational structure is expressed in a politician's interpersonal style, that is, the way he deals with other people<sup>30</sup>. Applied to foreign policy decision making, interpersonal style suggests that foreign policy makers relate to other states in ways that are straightforward extensions of their styles relating to people in their daily lives<sup>31</sup>. Two dimensions appear important in this respect. First, the degree of dominance a policy maker seeks over policy making subordinates and decisionmaking peers. Second, whether a policy maker adopts an extrovert or introvert attitude to his environment. Etheridge and Shepard then, making use of biographical material, classified decision makers in American foreign policy into the categories of high and low dominance, and of introvert versus extrovert. Next, they looked for disagreements over foreign policy<sup>32</sup>, Etheridge for the 1898-1968 period, while Shepard replicated this study for the years 1969-1984. It was hypothesized that those politicians who scored high on dominance would be advocating the

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<sup>28</sup> George, 'Assessing Presidential Character', p. 245.

<sup>29</sup> Barber concedes that worldview is given relatively little attention in his analysis. He thinks that cognitive beliefs may provide a better explanation than character, but expresses severe doubts about the importance of ideologies: 'scholars tend to concentrate on ideas, because their own world is a world of ideas', Barber, The Presidential Character, p. 527; the problem rather is that Barber puts a premium on parsimony: to him, it is either character, or ideas, that manage to predict performance. This separation will lead, however, to the neglect of the interrelationship between personality and cognitive beliefs. Both variables may be relevant in order to understand decisionmaking situations.

<sup>30</sup> Lloyd Etheridge, 'Hardball Politics: A Model', Political Psychology, (1), 1, 1979, pp. 3-26; Graham H. Shepard, 'Personality Effects on American Foreign Policy, 1969-1984: A Second Test of Interpersonal Generalization Theory', International Studies Quarterly, (32), 1988, pp. 91-123.

<sup>31</sup> Lloyd Etheridge, 'Personality Effects on American Foreign Policy, 1898-1968: A Test of Interpersonal Generalization Theory', American Political Science Review, (72), 2, 1978, pp. 434-451; Shepard, 'Personality Effects on American Foreign Policy', p. 92.

<sup>32</sup> Etheridge and Shepard limited their research to disagreements over force-related issues and to intra-elite quarrels over cooperative policies towards the Soviet Union. Etheridge discusses 49 cases of the former and 13 of the latter category. Shepard analyzes 108 force-related issues and 78 cooperation issues.

threat or actual use of force in crisis situations; likewise highly introvert individuals were expected to propose cooperative policies towards the Soviet Union relatively seldom.

Shepard's analysis of intra-elite conflicts on foreign policy shows that the direction of disagreement can be predicted in 77 percent of the cases relating to the use of force, thus confirming the results of Etheridge's study. However, concerning cooperation with the Soviet Union only 42 percent of the predicted nature of conflicts was confirmed, while Etheridge's original study had explained 85 percent.

It is important to note that Etheridge and Shepard manage to go one step further than Barber, as they are able to give precise predictions of policy stands of politicians, whereas Barber could only give an inclination, an attitude of American Presidents towards their job. As such, it seems possible to establish a link between motivational structure of individuals and their political behaviour. However, there are some problems with this approach. First of all, as Shepard notes himself, the relationship between personality and policy stand may be spurious, because an equally valid prediction can be obtained if one relies on the bureaucratic position of the individual policy maker as a predictor (at least for the 1969-1984 period)<sup>33</sup>.

Second, the positions individuals take, may be explained by their personalities, but these positions themselves do not yet tell us anything about the outcome of the specific interpersonal conflict. Studies of small group dynamics show that policy makers often change their opinion during the course of the decision making process. As most major foreign policy decisions are taken during a series of meetings, this factor may be relevant.

Third, interpersonal style cannot explain why certain situations are judged to be so dangerous in the first place. Such an understanding can only be obtained if one makes reference to a politician's view of the world, that is, his cognitive belief system.

In sum, although Barber, Etheridge and Shepard must be praised for their accomplishment to give a sounder basis to the link between personality and policy making, their analyses cannot provide a ground for saying that cognitive beliefs is irrelevant to the study of international politics.

### 5.3 The institutional setting

The importance of individual cognitive beliefs may be reduced by individual characteristics, such as health and personalities, but also by factors related to the institutional setting in which foreign policy makers have to operate. Three such institutional elements can be distinguished: first, considerations of domestic politics may set constraints on the decision

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<sup>33</sup> Shepard, 'Personality Effects on American Foreign Policy', p. 121.

making process; second, the organizational context in which foreign policy decisions are taken and implemented, may affect policy making, through the operation of bureaucratic politics or organizational processes.

### 5.3.1 Considerations of domestic politics

As in most democratic countries politicians will have to account for their policies at Polling Day, it is assumed that part of a politician's behaviour can be understood by his desire to be re-elected. It is therefore suggested that considerations of a domestic nature will play an important role in the foreign policy process<sup>34</sup>. By implication, cognitive beliefs are considered to be of secondary importance, as foreign policy makers will first of all be guided by electoral considerations<sup>35</sup>.

Hampson goes furthest in this type of reasoning<sup>36</sup>. In a comparative analysis of three American foreign policy crises, all related to Cuba<sup>37</sup>, he shows that electoral considerations significantly affected a President's response to a crisis: on two occasions this resulted in a President showing resolve, while on a third occasion the vicinity of elections caused the President to make an effort to avoid that the crisis came out in the open. Hampson concludes that cognitive beliefs of decision makers cannot be but a partial guide to the understanding of the policy process. Instead, he proposes a theory of political risk aversion, suggesting that a politician's top priority value will always be his own political position: 'anything which poses a direct, immediate threat to this value will be taken most seriously, more than a direct (or indirect) medium term, or long term political threat'<sup>38</sup>.

William Quandt has refined this proposition suggesting that the foreign policy of an American President will be tightly linked to both the electoral calendar and his own expertise

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<sup>34</sup> As a matter of fact, this factor is close to an individual's motivational structure: the more a politician is driven by his need for power, the more likely it is that he will pay due attention to electoral considerations; cf. footnotes 18-19.

<sup>35</sup> For a thorough analysis of the subject, see Robert A. Divine, Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections, Two Volumes, New Viewpoints, New York, 1974.

<sup>36</sup> Fen Osler Hampson, 'The Divided Decision Maker. American Domestic Politics and the Cuban Crises', International Security, (9), 3, 1984/1985, pp. 130-165.

<sup>37</sup> The 1962 missile crisis, the 1970 Cienfuegos crisis, and the 1979 Cuban brigade crisis.

<sup>38</sup> Hampson, ibid., p. 104, emphasis in original.

in foreign affairs<sup>39</sup>. Quandt presents a cycle of performance, making a distinction between first-term and second-term Presidents. The former start relatively inexperienced in foreign affairs and will be interested in getting re-elected. The latter will have some expertise in foreign policy making, but know that they cannot be elected for a third term. This leads Quandt to expect that first-term Presidents will run the risk of making mistakes during their first year, that their second year's performance will be influenced by the Congressional elections of November, that Presidents in their third term will search for a foreign policy success with an eye on the coming election year, while during that election year they will try to avoid trouble at the foreign front. Second-term Presidents display a different pattern; the first 18 months they will be able to take new foreign policy initiatives, but towards the second half of their second year they will have to take Congressional elections into account. Thereafter, a President will become a 'lame duck', because, not being eligible for a third term, he will gradually lose authority. Fearing a similar process both Truman and Johnson postponed their announcement not to run for a second term until the last possible moment. Unfortunately, Quandt does not systematically produce the evidence that would sustain his claims, and history suggests that quite some postwar Presidents do not fit the pattern<sup>40</sup>.

Nincic tries to assess to what extent American foreign policy towards the Soviet Union has been influenced by electoral considerations<sup>41</sup>. Starting from the assumption that policy makers will judge it less risky to exaggerate than to underestimate the Soviet threat, he finds that election years show a significant increase in spending for the development and production of strategic weapons, accompanied by a reduction in the conclusion of agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as a reduction in the number of summits. Nincic's theory is radically different from Quandt's: whereas the latter predicts a fourth year of avoiding trouble, the former emphasizes an aggressive foreign policy towards, at least, the Soviet Union. Both analyses, of course, share the assumption that a decision maker will take public opinion into account.

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<sup>39</sup> William B. Quandt, 'The Electoral Cycle and the Conduct of Foreign Policy', Political Science Quarterly, (101), 5, 1986, pp. 825-837. An elaboration of his argument can be found in his Camp David: Peace Making and Politics, Brookings, Washington DC, 1986, pp. 9-29.

<sup>40</sup> Quandt does not elaborate the pattern of second term Presidents. As a first term President Richard Nixon planned his foreign policy successes such as the SALT I treaty, and his journey to China to fall in his fourth year, thus trying to maximize electoral benefits. It seems odd indeed why in Quandt's approach a President should not try to have a foreign policy success in the fourth year rather than the third.

<sup>41</sup> Miroslav Nincic, 'U.S. Soviet Policy and the Electoral Connection', World Politics, (42), 3, 1990, pp. 370-396.

The extent to which domestic political considerations play a role in foreign policy decision making in Western democracies depends on, first, the way their political systems respond to societal demands, and, second, on the existence of policy networks of interest groups specifically oriented towards foreign policy issues<sup>42</sup>. Much work on the influence of public opinion on foreign policy concentrates on the policy process in the United States. This can be described as a relatively open system in which specific interest groups and public opinion have a certain effect on foreign policy making. Foreign-policy making in the United Kingdom is much less open<sup>43</sup>. British policymakers are less likely to take mass opinion into account. The role of Parliament, compared to the American Congress, is of a much more passive nature. The nature of British political system gives an important role to the majority party in Parliament. If domestic considerations of domestic politics are to influence British foreign policy makers, it is likely that these will be related to preserving a majority in Parliament rather than to satisfying the public. Sometimes, a back-bench revolt may therefore set constraints on British foreign policy<sup>44</sup>. Although it is difficult to spell out the various conditions under which domestic considerations will play an important role on British foreign policy making, an analysis based on cognitive belief system should be open to their possible impact.

### 5.3.2 The organizational context

Two waves of literature, the first in the late 1950s and early 1960s<sup>45</sup>, the second in the early 1970s<sup>46</sup>, have provided a different approach to the analysis of international politics. These works put emphasis on political processes within the institutions of the nation-state and claim that organizational processes decisively influence both the formation and the implementation of a country's foreign policy, and thus international relations. This 'discovery'

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Risse-Kappen, 'Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies', *World Politics*, (43), 4, 1991, esp. pp. 480-486.

<sup>43</sup> Risse-Kappen, 'Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies', pp. 500-502; Zara Steiner, 'Decision-Making in American and British Foreign Policy: an Open and Shut Case', *Review of International Studies*, (13), 1, 1987, pp. 1-9.

<sup>44</sup> Steiner, *ibid.*, esp. pp. 15-16.

<sup>45</sup> See for an overview of the literature of the first wave, Robert J. Art, 'Bureaucratic politics and American Foreign Policy: a Critique', *Policy Sciences*, (4), 1973, p. 483, footnote 3.

<sup>46</sup> See for an overview of the literature of the second wave, Art, *ibid.*, p. 487, footnote 2. For a discussion of both, their differences and similarities, Art, *ibid.*, pp. 468-480.

of the relevance of certain national political actors was one of the foundations of the wave of criticism of traditional realism that treated the nation-state as a unitary actor that rationally pursued its national interests. The need to incorporate different organizational processes made it far more difficult to rely on the concept of national interest, because its definition could vary with the different outcomes of the organizational processes. Moreover, not only does this approach challenge the old concept of the nation-state, but it tends to play down the importance of the cognitive beliefs of political elites as well.

Basically, two ideas exist of how organizational processes influence foreign policy outcomes. One is usually called bureaucratic politics, the second organizational processes. Both ideas found their most articulate statement in Graham Allison's analysis of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis<sup>47</sup> and Morton Halperin's account of the decision to deploy an Anti Ballistic Missile system by the Johnson Administration<sup>48</sup>. What are their basic propositions?

1. Standard operation procedures. The organizational process model, as it has been labelled, considers foreign policy to be a product of outputs of large organizations, such as the State Department, the Armed Forces, etc.. Because such large, complex organizations have to coordinate many different subagencies, standard operation procedures have usually been developed in order to be able to deal swiftly with problems these organizations have been asked to resolve. This device, however, has an important negative consequence, that is, the tendency of organizations to come up with the first solution to a problem that seems good enough (satisfying behaviour). In foreign policy making this implies, first, that an organization, when asked to develop alternative policy options, or contingency plans, will be tempted to present the plan that had been in the drawer since a long time. An example of this can be found by routine procedures of mobilization. Levy shows how in July 1914 the Russian decision makers were caught by the dilemma of not mobilizing at all or mobilizing along both the Austrian and the German border, while they just wanted to deter Austria from attacking Serbia after the murder of the Grand Duke at Serajewo that Summer. Russian standard operational procedures, however, did not provide for a partial mobilization against Austria

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<sup>47</sup> Graham Allison, Essence of Decision. Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis, Little, Brown, Boston, 1971.

<sup>48</sup> Morton L. Halperin, with the assistance of Priscilla Clapp and Arnold Kanter, Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy, Brookings, Washington, 1974.

only. The Russians knew, however, that mobilization of their troops along the German border would alarm Germany and provoke further escalation in the form of German mobilization<sup>49</sup>.

Second, when asked to implement a certain policy decision, these organizations will rely on their standard operational procedures<sup>50</sup>. Allison thus shows that the Americans were able to deduce that the Soviet Union was constructing a missile site on Cuba before its construction had been completed, because its building fell under the Soviet Air Defence Command that built up the launching spot according to the same procedures under which it had been constructing missile basis within the Soviet Union for years. The transport of the missiles themselves, however, fell under the Soviet military intelligence GRU, which always handled its business under secrecy. The missile basis was thus discovered without having seen the missiles<sup>51</sup>.

2. Bureaucratic politics. The most important element of the bureaucratic politics proposition is the observation that a nation's foreign policy is not formulated by the top decision maker, such as the President of the United States, but is the product of a complex process of interaction of many participants within the bureaucracy<sup>52</sup>. The President cannot command, but has to persuade bureaucratic organizations to follow his preferred course of action. The position taken by the participants at the decision making process is a product of their function: 'since national security interests per se are essentially non-operational and therefore inadequate guides for action, most participants in the national security policy process turn to other sources for clues to the requirements of security and the best means to protect and enhance it. Other concerns and other interests become synonymous with the national security interests'<sup>53</sup>. The position individuals will take can therefore be predicted by making

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<sup>49</sup> According to Levy this can be explained by the tendency of military planners to plan for worst-case situations only, in this case, a war against Austria and Germany simultaneously. Jack Levy, 'Organizational Routines and the Causes of War', International Studies Quarterly, (30), 2, 1986, pp. 200-201.

<sup>50</sup> Allison, Essence of Decision, Chapter 4; Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., 'Theories of Organizational Process and Foreign Policy Outcomes', in Paul Lauren (ed.), Diplomacy, Free Press, New York, 1979, pp. 139-142.

<sup>51</sup> Allison, ibid. ?

<sup>52</sup> Donald L. Hafner, 'Bureaucratic Politics and "Those Frigging Missiles": JFK, Cuba, and U.S. Missiles in Turkey', Orbis. A Journal of World Affairs, (21), 2, 1977, pp. 314-316.

<sup>53</sup> Morton H. Halperin and Arnold Kanter, 'The Bureaucratic Perspective: A Preliminary Framework', in Halperin and Kanter (eds.), Readings in American Foreign Policy. A Bureaucratic Perspective, Little, Brown, Boston, 1973, p. 6.

use of Richard Neustadt's adagium 'Where you stand, depends on where you sit'<sup>54</sup>. Public choice theories have stipulated various assumptions that account for the behaviour of members of bureaucratic organizations<sup>55</sup>.

A policy outcome can never be predicted because it depends on the bargaining process between the various organizations. Moreover, the infighting does not stop once a decision has been taken. In the phase of implementation, organizations try to further their own interests. As an example of the first case the rift between the Indian professional military and the civilian top caused Prime Minister Nehru not to believe a warning by the military that the Indian army would not be able to repel the Chinese from the Himalayan area that they had occupied on 8 September 1962. Nehru ordered a counter attack relying on the assurances from the civilian branch of government. The military in the field sabotaged the execution of the order, as they knew it was going to be a major disaster<sup>56</sup>.

An example of the influence of bureaucratic politics during the phase of implementation comes from the abortive attempt in 1980 to rescue American hostages in Tehran. Once the decision to embark on a rescue mission had been taken, each of the military services insisted on having responsibility for that part of the operation that was going to employ that particular service's material. As a consequence, the U.S. Navy provided both the helicopters and their pilots, because they had to take off from a carrier in the Persian Gulf, whereas the U.S. Air Force provided the transport planes that had to start their journey from air bases in Saudi Arabia. One helicopter collided with one C-130 transport plane. The engines of two helicopters broke down because of the heat, and one helicopter was lost in a dust storm in the Iranian desert. This failure can be explained by the fact the Navy helicopter pilots had been trained to sweep mines, not to operate in distant deserts<sup>57</sup>.

Bureaucratic politics and standard operational procedures thus seem to offer important insights into the study of international politics. Moreover, because by implication they tend to reduce the relative weight of the top decision makers, because one can never at forehand know

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<sup>54</sup> Richard Neustadt, Presidential Power

<sup>55</sup> Bureaucrats are thought to maximize the agency's size, budget, or tasks; see, for a critical analysis of public choice theories of bureaucratic processes, Patrick Dunleavy, Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice. Economic Explanations in Political Science, Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York etc., 1991, pp. 147-173.

<sup>56</sup> Yaarov Vertzberger, 'Bureaucratic-organizational Politics and Information processing in a Developing State', International Studies Quarterly, (28), 1, 1984, pp. 78-79.

<sup>57</sup> Steve Smith, 'Policy Preferences and Bureaucratic Position: the Case of the American Hostage Rescue Mission', International Affairs, (61), 1, 1985, pp. 21-23.



what the outcome of the interaction between the various organizational interests involved will be. It is obvious, therefore, that this approach belittles the importance of decision makers' cognitive beliefs. If one can explain the puzzle of Suez by looking at these organizational variables then our journey will have to end there. However, the primary importance of the bureaucratic politics model for the explanation of international politics has come under strong attack<sup>58</sup>. As most of the literature centers around Allison's analysis of the Cuban missile crisis, it is used as an entry to the re-evaluation of the bureaucratic politics model.

Allison wants to answer three important questions regarding the Cuban missile crisis: (1) why did the Soviet Union install missiles on Cuba? (2) why did the United States respond with a blockade, and not with, for example, a diplomatic move, or a surgical air strike? (3) why did the Soviet Union decide to remove the missiles? In order to answer all questions Allison presents three different ways to respond to these research questions. First, he offers the classical realist approach which he labels the rational actors model; second, the organizational process model; and third, the bureaucratic politics model. Allison's innovative models, however, hardly give a satisfactory answer to his three fundamental research questions, a point which is seldom stated that explicitly. The only real explanatory contribution comes from the organizational process model in answering the question of why the United States responded with a naval blockade rather than with a surgical air strike: the surgical air strike never was a serious option until the second week of the crisis, because the Air Force, when asked to produce a plan for such an operation, was caught by surprise, because in its contingency planning it had anticipated full scale attacks on Cuba, but no operations of such a limited nature. The Air Force standard operational procedures therefore limited the options available to the decision makers. It still does not explain, however, why no diplomatic move was seriously considered<sup>59</sup>.

All other evidence that Allison presents, deals with aspects at best tangent to the decision making process. The Russian negligence of secrecy when constructing a missile site, set the time constraints of the crisis: the United States became aware that within a short time SAM missiles could become operational against American territory. Although the Russian negligence itself can be explained by standard operational procedures, it does not answer either

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<sup>58</sup> For an overview of the critical literature, see Steve Smith, 'Allison and the Cuban Missile Crisis: A Review of the Bureaucratic Politics Model of Foreign Policy Decision Making', Millennium. Journal of International Studies, (9), 1, 1980, pp. 21-40.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Hampson, 'The divided decision maker'.

the question of why the Soviet Union installed the missiles, or why the Americans responded as they did.

The exact date of discovery can be traced back to both the organizational routine of U 2 flights<sup>60</sup>, to the bickering between the Air Force and the CIA over the administration of the flights over Cuba and to the CIA's fear of losing control over the U 2 programme if another plane would be lost to the Soviet Union<sup>61</sup>. These observations nevertheless lack explanatory power in answering the fundamental question of why the U.S.A. responded as she did, or why she responded in the first place.

Moreover, Allison himself notes, when analyzing the Executive Committee decision making process, that in the course of various sessions, no member defended consistently the same policy option throughout the crisis: this seems to contradict his bureaucratic politics model which expects decision makers to take the positions that reflect their organizational interest<sup>62</sup>.

It is therefore crucial to recognize that the evidence seems to suggest that the decision making process is not necessarily exhaustively understood by the bureaucratic politics and organizational process models<sup>63</sup>.

It may be useful to make a distinction between a number of elements that seem relevant to ascertain the likelihood that the models of bureaucratic politics and organizational process become highly relevant<sup>64</sup>. First of all, one should pay attention to the decisional structure. The bureaucratic politics paradigm pictures the top-level decision maker as simply one more bureaucratic player. However, if a President decides to be involved in the decision making process, he can be an almost omnipotent player. Reversely, one could hypothesize that

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<sup>60</sup> Between 5 September and 9 September 1962 no flight had been scheduled over Western Cuba.

<sup>61</sup> So far the CIA had lost 2 U 2 planes.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, 'Allison and the Cuban Missile Crisis', p. 27.

<sup>63</sup> Caldwell discusses a comparative analysis of 11 case studies that reveals that in only two cases did the bureaucratic politics model provide the best explanation of events, Dan Caldwell, 'Bureaucratic Foreign Policy Making', American Behavioral Scientist, (21), 1, 1977, pp. 102-104. Brenner shows that Halperin's (1974) careful analysis of ABM deployment does not explain why MacNamara agreed to it against his own preference, which should have been his main research question, Michael J. Brenner, 'Bureaucratic Politics in Foreign Policy', Armed Forces and Society, (2), 2, 1976, pp. 327-328.

<sup>64</sup> Based on Jerel A. Rosati, 'Developing a Systematic Decision Making Framework. Bureaucratic Politics in Perspective', World Politics, (33), 1981, esp. pp. 245-251.

bureaucratic politics will be a more influential factor, if the President decides to remain at some distance from the issue<sup>65</sup>.

Second, one will have to take the decisional context into account. The nature of the issue is highly likely to affect the importance of bureaucratic factors. Especially international crises are likely to be handled by the higher levels of the governmental hierarchy. It seems much more likely that in those situations the President will be able to influence the decision making process<sup>66</sup>.

Finally, the decision making process itself should be appreciated. It must be clear from the evaluation of Allison's models that even though the President may have decided to participate in the decision making process, for instance, because the issue at stake has been defined to be of crisis dimensions, bureaucratic politics and organizational processes may still be relevant for two reasons. The very perception of an issue to be a crisis, as well as the timing of its occurrence may have been influenced by organizational processes. Next, the search for and awareness of policy alternatives may be affected by those factors<sup>67</sup> and may thus influence the decision making process.

In conclusion, it should be borne in mind that an analysis based on the models of bureaucratic politics or organizational processes does not relieve the researcher from the need to pay attention to cognitive beliefs of individual decision makers. On the other hand, every analysis of decision making processes based on cognitive belief systems should be open to the role of those models at the various stages of decision making. They can severely affect the timing, and perception, of a threatening situation, and may produce certain policy options rather than others, when organizations are asked to come up with alternatives<sup>68</sup>. However, because of the emphasis this study lies on the contribution of cognitive belief systems to an analysis of foreign policy making, the organizational context, just as considerations of domestic politics, will be considered a variable that constrains that process.

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<sup>65</sup> Stephen Krasner, 'Are Bureaucracies Important (Or Allison Wonderland)?', Foreign Policy, (7), 1972, pp. 167-169.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Ole Holsti, 'Foreign Policy Makers Viewed Psychologically'; This shift from lower to higher levels of decision making is analyzed by Avi Shlaim in The United States and the Berlin Blockade.

<sup>67</sup> As well as their implementation.

<sup>68</sup> Rosati thus tries to develop 3 types of decision making structures, called Presidential Dominance, Bureaucratic Dominance, and Local Dominance, 'Developing a systematic decision making framework', p. 247.

## Chapter 6: Small group processes

### 6.1 Introductory remarks

So far this study has stressed the importance of the cognitive belief systems of individual politicians in order to understand certain problems of international politics. A case could be made that in certain types of political systems, such as dictatorships, individuals are the key decision makers in foreign policy. Various techniques, such as the operational code or the cognitive map, could thus serve as methods that could ascertain the specific role of these individual politicians in foreign policy outcomes<sup>1</sup>. An obvious remark would be that in countries where such autonomy for political leaders is absent, for instance in countries with cabinet decisionmaking, or where the political leader is dependent on soliciting the collaboration of various agencies with other means than the authority that springs from his formal position, important foreign policy decisions are actually made by small groups of top level decision makers<sup>2</sup>.

From time to time, students of international politics have looked at social psychology in order to incorporate the effects of a small group setting on foreign policy decision making<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, little systematic work has been done: the importance of a small group setting is often mentioned without an analysis of how precisely it affected the foreign policy outcome. One cause of this neglect is the perceived or real incompatibility of much experimental psychological work on small groups with the reality of foreign policy decision making.

Objections to the application of knowledge from psychological experiments are fourfold. First, it is often pointed out that in real world foreign policy settings it is impossible to control for variables that can be controlled for in experimental settings. Moreover, the cognitive tasks real world decision makers are facing are much more complex than the problems experimental groups are supposed to solve. Second, unlike politicians confronted with a foreign policy problem, individuals, who are asked to participate in experimental

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<sup>1</sup> Ole R. Holsti, 'Foreign Policy Makers Viewed Psychologically: "Cognitive Process" Approaches', in James N. Rosenau (ed.), In Search of Global Patterns, The Free Press, New York, 1976, pp. 127 ff..

<sup>2</sup> Hermann and Hermann have made an attempt to develop a strategy in order to determine different decision making units; Margaret G. Hermann and Charles F. Hermann, 'Who Makes Foreign Policy Decisions and How: An Empirical Enquiry', International Studies Quarterly, (33), 3, 1989, pp. 361-387.

<sup>3</sup> An early example is Joseph de Rivera, The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy, Bobbs Merrill, Columbus, 1968.

research are not responsible for the outcome of the group's deliberations. The stakes are much higher in the real world. Third, the stress that is experienced during foreign policy crises is reproduced only rarely, or insufficiently during experimental settings. A last objection to the application of evidence from laboratory experiments points at their often contradictory evidence. Why, students of international relations could say, should this material be used if psychologists are not unified themselves about the specific effects of small group processes<sup>4</sup>.

This is not sufficient reason to put experimental evidence aside completely. One should avoid randomly borrowing from laboratory experiments and searching for corresponding evidence in foreign policy settings. It makes more sense to try to apply well-developed theories about group processes during policy making to one's own set of research questions. One such theory stands out; Irving Janis's theory of groupthink<sup>5</sup>. In this chapter Janis's theory as well as 't Hart's recent refinement<sup>6</sup> will be examined, especially in the context of the role of individual cognitive belief systems.

The basic proposition of Janis's theory of Groupthink is that small, cohesive groups will engage in excessive concurrence seeking. That is, when confronted with a pressing decisional situation, participants will rate the value of the group itself, and their membership of it, higher than anything else. This is likely to cause a relatively poor decision making quality, and may eventually lead to a policy fiasco. When originally formulated in 1972, this was a rather provocative thesis, as cohesive small groups were supposedly effective safeguards against conflict-ridden decision making situations<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Holsti, 'Foreign Policy Decision Makers Viewed Psychologically', pp. 124-125; George, Presidential Decisionmaking, pp. 82-83; the latter two objections do not apply to small groups specifically, but to psychological experiments generally; Irving Janis, Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes, revised second edition, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1982 (first edition 1972), pp. 307-308, note 4, suggests a number of strategies to make use of experimental research in order to analyze real world situations.

<sup>5</sup> Janis, op.cit..

<sup>6</sup> Paul 't Hart, Groupthink in Government. A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure, Swets and Zeitlinger, Amsterdam, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> 't Hart notes how social psychological theory had ignored both sociological evidence of detrimental effects of small cohesive groups and the potentially positive effects of conflict within small groups, 't Hart, Groupthink in Government, p. 6.

Groupthink builds on the findings of an early study by Maier and Solem<sup>8</sup>. They demonstrated that group members often know and express the correct answer to a problem, while the group as a whole unanimously decides to adopt an incorrect answer<sup>9</sup>. Apparently, either pressure from the group's majority or self censorship may cause a group not to examine, or just superficially, alternative, and possibly correct, solutions to a problem. Janis came to this proposition by way of induction after having analysed several major foreign policy decisions of the United States, some of them resulting in success, others in failure<sup>10</sup>. The causal model that was developed on the basis of these case studies was next applied to the analysis of how a small group of politicians could get entangled in a cover-up, such as Watergate<sup>11</sup>.

Ever since it has been formulated in the early 1970s, groupthink has become a popular term, often employed to explain policy making by relatively small groups. Unfortunately, very little systematic research has been done into either the theoretical considerations on which it is grounded or its empirical relevance in explaining policy outcomes<sup>12</sup>. This is exactly what has been attempted by 't Hart. This chapter will therefore first examine the original formulation of groupthink theory by Irving Janis; then, criticisms that has been formulated against it will be discussed); next, 't Hart's refinement will be examined; finally, the implications of small group dynamics for an analysis of the 1956 Suez crisis will be assessed.

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<sup>8</sup> 't Hart traces the intellectual origins of Janis's theory to his participation in Stouffer's American Soldier Project; Paul 't Hart, 'Classics in Political Psychology: Irving L. Janis' Victims of Groupthink', Political Psychology, (12), 2, 1991, pp. 247-278.

<sup>9</sup> N.R.G. Maier and A.R. Solem, 'The Contribution of a Discussion Leader to the Quality of Group Thinking: the Effective Use of Minority Opinion', Human Relations, (5), 1952, pp. 277-288, quoted by Eugene M. Fodor and Terry Smith, 'The Power Motive as an Influence on Group Decision Making', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, (42), 1, 1982, p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Four cases of the original study (1972) counted as policy fiascos: the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, the 1950 decision to proceed to North Korea, the failure to anticipate a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 and the 1965 escalation of the Vietnam war; two cases were clear successes: the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and the making of the Marshall Plan in 1947; the latter thus served to show that a small group setting need not be detrimental to the quality of decision making.

<sup>11</sup> This was done in the revised and enlarged 1982 edition of Groupthink, pp. 198-241.

<sup>12</sup> 't Hart discusses laboratory experiments that attempted at testing several of the theoretical implications of Janis's groupthink thesis, Groupthink in Government, pp. 14-15; he also presents an overview of case studies to which the groupthink hypothesis has been applied, ibid., pp. 12-14. To this list should be added his own analysis of the Iran-Contra scandal, ibid., pp. 215-271; 't Hart's original dissertation included an analysis of the Dutch failure to anticipate a German invasion in an appropriate manner in 1940; Paul 't Hart, Groupthink in Government. A study of small groups and policy failure, dissertation, Leiden University, 1990, pp. 317-361.

## 6.2 Janis's theory of groupthink

Groupthink refers to the phenomenon that decision making groups reach early agreement about an important problem that has to be resolved. This is called concurrence-seeking. The crucial point, of course, is the term early agreement. It is implied that agreement is reached before all aspects of a correct decision making procedure have been taken into account.

1. Consequences of groupthink. It is suggested in groupthink theory, first, that bad procedures will be caused by groupthink and, second, that bad procedures will lead to unsuccessful policy outcomes. Indicators of defective decisionmaking procedures can be found in an incomplete survey of alternatives and objectives, a failure to examine the risks of the preferred option, a failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, poor information search, a selective bias in processing information at hand, and a failure to work out contingency plans<sup>13</sup>. The more symptoms of defective decisionmaking are present, the more likely it is that the selected policy will be unsuccessful. However, the presence of even all these symptoms cannot be a sufficient condition for the occurrence of policy failure<sup>14</sup>: fortune may still on the policy makers' side.

2. Identifying groupthink. Janis has formulated eight indicators of the presence of early concurrence-seeking, headed under three types<sup>15</sup>:

(A) The overestimation of the group. This can be observed in (1) the group's illusion of invulnerability. This refers to a feeling among group members that they can handle any kind of trouble; (2) a belief in the inherent morality of the group, or the absence of any doubt that motives and actions might not be principled or justifiable.

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<sup>13</sup> Janis, Groupthink, pp. 9-10, 244. Irving L. Janis and Leon Mann, Decision Making. A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment, The Free Press, New York, 1977, pp. 10-14.

<sup>14</sup> Janis stresses this aspect, Irving L. Janis, Crucial Decisions. Leadership in Policymaking and Crisis Management, The Free Press, New York, 1989, p. 4. In a comparative study of 19 major postwar foreign policy crises involving the United States a correlation was found between decision making procedures and policy outcome: the more defective procedures employed, the less successful the outcome for the United States, Gregory M. Herek, Irving L. Janis and Paul Huth, 'Decision Making During International Crises. Is Quality of Process Related to Outcome?', Journal of Conflict Resolution, (31), 2, 1987, pp. 203-226. The authors stress that this correlation may be spurious, pp. 218-219.

<sup>15</sup> Janis, Groupthink, pp. 174-175.

- (B) Closed-mindedness, as evidenced in (3) collective rationalizations that result in discounting information that might contradict the group's analysis of the situation; and (4) the development of stereotyped views of outgroups, which facilitates the discrediting of their communications.
- (C) Pressures toward uniformity, as shown by (5) self-censorship by individual group-members: each member tends to minimize the importance of personal doubts and counterarguments, resulting in (6) a shared illusion of unanimity; (7) direct pressure on those members who express doubt and strong arguments against the overall consensus; (8) the emergence of self-appointed mindguards who withhold adverse information from the group.

3. Causes of groupthink. Janis distinguishes between three antecedent conditions that may provoke groupthink: high group cohesiveness, structural faults of the organization, and third, the presence of a provocative situational context.

- (a) High group cohesiveness. Early concurrence-seeking is predominantly explained by the extreme cohesiveness of the decisionmaking group. The members of the group are inclined to attach a higher value to group unity, and therefore consensus, rather than a systematic resolution of the problem confronting them. To Janis, the eight symptoms of groupthink form a coherent pattern that points to a collective effort by the group members to face an external challenge together. A shared illusion of invulnerability and collective rationalizations serve to suppress feelings of personal inadequacy; a belief in the group's moral cause as well as its stereotyped view of opponents help its members to overcome value conflicts, especially when military action is seriously considered; the forms of pressure toward uniformity and the resulting illusion of unanimity are devices to improve individual confidence and self-esteem which have become dependent on group unity<sup>16</sup>. Not only highly cohesive groups are groupthink-prone, but moderately cohesive groups as well<sup>17</sup>.
- (b) Structural faults of the organization. Four elements are mentioned. First, the insulation of the group from direct contact with persons in the organization that are not members

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<sup>16</sup> Janis, *ibid.*, pp. 256-259.

<sup>17</sup> The exact level of cohesiveness is seldom discussed. Janis usually refers to high cohesiveness, occasionally seems to include moderately levels of cohesion as well. Irving L. Janis, 'Sources of Error in Strategic Decision Making', in Johannes M. Pennings (ed.), Organizational Strategy and Change. New Views on Formulating and Implementing Strategic Decisions, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1985, p. 169; Janis and Mann, Decision making, p. 131.



of the group<sup>18</sup>. Second, the absence of a tradition of impartial leadership: a leader is not constrained to avoid pushing for his own preferred alternative by any established norm in the organization that favours open discussion<sup>19</sup>. Third, a lack of established norms that set methodical procedures of decision making<sup>20</sup>. Finally, homogeneity of group members' social background and ideology<sup>21</sup>.

- (c) Presence of a provocative situational context. First, small groups are usually installed in order to cope with a newly arisen threatening situation. The higher the level of stress generated by such a threat, coupled with low hope of a better solution than the leader's, the more probable it is that early concurrence seeking will occur. Second, group members may be suffering from low self-esteem that has been developed before the group confronts the new threat. Such low self-esteem might have been provoked by (1) recent failures, (2) excessive difficulties at resolving other, contemporary, policy problems, (3) moral dilemmas which do not seem to offer policy options that respect ethical standards<sup>22</sup>.

To summarize Janis's argument, one could say that small decision making units tend to display early concurrence-seeking which can result in defective decision making which in turn may produce policy fiascos. This phenomenon can be measured in real-world situations by eight operational variables, so-called symptoms of groupthink. Early concurrence-seeking is explained by the need of highly cohesive groups to maintain group unity in order to keep intact individual members' self-esteem. The probability of provoking of this causal sequence is augmented if two elements are present, that is, certain structural faults of the organization and a provocative situational context.

It would be wrong to underestimate Janis's contribution to decision making theory. He has presented the first elaborate attempt to incorporate an important variable, that is so easily invoked, but so rarely examined in a systematic way, into explanations of government

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<sup>18</sup> Actually, this is considered a very influential variable, Janis, 'Sources of Error in Strategic Decision Making', p. 174.

<sup>19</sup> As a matter of fact, elsewhere Janis much more pointedly speaks of directive leadership; Janis and Mann, Decision Making, pp. 131-132.

<sup>20</sup> Such as filling out a balance sheet of pros and cons for each available option.

<sup>21</sup> Janis, Groupthink, pp. 248-250.

<sup>22</sup> Janis, ibid., pp. 250-254.

behaviour. Moreover, he has provided valuable explanations of foreign policy outcomes that had been puzzling scholars for a long time. He has thus contributed significantly to blending insights from social psychology and political science.

### 6.3 Flaws in Janis's theory of groupthink

Nevertheless, his work has provoked criticism from students of both disciplines. Four types of issues have been raised against his model. The first three reflect the concern of social psychologists that Janis did not try to ground Groupthink in evidence from social psychology in a systematic way. The fourth reflects the concern of political scientists that to a certain extent the aspect of power relationships is neglected in Groupthink<sup>23</sup>. They regard (1) the causal chain of his theory, (2) the exact role of cohesion, (3) the importance of leadership behaviour, and (4) the place of politics in his analysis.

1. The causal chain of groupthink theory. The original groupthink study suggested that three antecedent conditions (group cohesion, organizational structure, and a provocative situational context) further the occurrence of early concurrence-seeking, which may lead to defective decisionmaking, which may consequently result in unsuccessful policies. Unfortunately, Janis only implicitly theorizes about the relative importance of each antecedent condition. A reformulation, based on close-reading, suggests that cohesion and a provocative situational context should be considered as independent variables that may cause groupthink, while the way in which a small group is organized could be defined as an intervening variable which can act as a moderator or reinforcement of the negative influence of the independent variables<sup>24</sup>.

Unfortunately, the exact role of the provocative context is not clarified. One does not know whether both high stress and group cohesiveness are necessary conditions for groupthink to occur. By intuition, the claim that high stress will contribute to defective decision making seems plausible. Evidence from social psychology, however, points to positive effects of moderate levels of stress on the problem-solving capacity of individuals<sup>25</sup>. Evidence from Janis's original case studies makes the matter all the more puzzling: during the 1962 Cuban

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<sup>23</sup> 't Hart explicitly aims at giving Groupthink theory a better foundation in both disciplines; 't Hart, Groupthink in Government; see section 6.4.

<sup>24</sup> 't Hart, ibid., p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> George and Holsti, 'The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy-Makers', in Cornelius P. Cotter (ed.), Political Science Annual, Volume 6, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1975, pp. 257; George, Presidential Decisionmaking, pp. 48-49.

missile crisis high levels of stress were experienced by a highly cohesive group, yet no large number of symptoms of groupthink could be observed; the weeks preceding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 could not be characterized as highly stressful<sup>26</sup> for the ingroup around Admiral Kimmel, Commander-in-Chief of the American Pacific Fleet, yet, according to Janis, this small group fell prey to groupthink and ignored clear warnings that an attack was at hand<sup>27</sup>. Apparently, Groupthink can occur without a provocative situational context, which implies that groupcohesiveness is the most crucial variable.

A second flaw in the causal chain is the exact nature of concurrence seeking. After all, concurrence seeking is an element inherent to any decision making situation involving more than one participant. At some point, one needs to reach agreement on an issue, stop discussing it, and move on to the next matter. Concurrence seeking thus need not be counter-productive<sup>28</sup>. Groupthink therefore becomes a problem if during consequential decision making situations early, that is, premature, concurrence-seeking takes place<sup>29</sup>.

The nature of the operational definition of groupthink, its eight symptoms, forms a third flaw in the theory's causal sequence. First of all, are all symptoms equally important ? It has been suggested that nearly all symptoms should be observable if one wants to speak of groupthink<sup>30</sup>. Secondly, are all symptoms that are distinguished by Janis, manifestations of concurrence-seeking ? Longley and Pruitt have argued that the illusion of invulnerability and unanimity should be seen as indications of a phase that precedes concurrence-seeking. Similarly, a belief in the group's inherent morality and the phenomenon of stereotyping outgroups are unrelated to concurrence-seeking as such: they can be themes on which concurrence can be reached, but do not form part of the process of concurrence-seeking<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> In a note, Janis distinguished external stress, produced by sources outside the ingroup, from internal stress, stemming from the group's low self-esteem, *Groupthink*, pp. 301-302, note 5; nevertheless, the group around Kimmel was not suffering from low self-esteem either.

<sup>27</sup> These puzzling questions can be found in Jeanne Longley and Dean G. Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', in Ladd Wheeler (ed.), *Review of Personality and Social Psychology. Volume 1*, SAGE, Beverly Hills, 1980, pp. 85-86.

<sup>28</sup> Longley and Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', pp. 77-79. They suggest that groupthink may be useful in routine-like situations, but detrimental to more critical decisionmaking situations. This is acknowledged by Janis, 'Sources of Error in Strategic Decision Making', pp. 176-179.

<sup>29</sup> Janis makes this point in a note, *Groupthink*, pp. 298-299, note 1.

<sup>30</sup> Janis stipulated this in 'Sources of Error in Strategic Decision Making', p. 173.

<sup>31</sup> Longley and Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', pp. 79-81.

This would imply, first of all, a much more refined picture of the different stages of group decision making, and, second, that collective rationalizations, self-censorship, direct pressure on dissenters, and self-appointed mindguards count as most relevant symptoms of the phenomenon.

2. The role of cohesion. Group cohesiveness thus seems to be Janis's most important antecedent condition. Nevertheless, its weight has been put into question by several laboratory tests of the groupthink-hypothesis<sup>32</sup>. The Flowers study could not find any direct relationship between cohesiveness and groupthink, defined as number of solutions to a problem proposed by the group. Rather, directive leadership seemed to account for the relatively poor number of solutions produced. Although the Flowers test points to the role of a variable that is still unspecified, leadership, its experimental design is severely weakened by its procedure in which participating leaders were told at forehand encouraged to restrict discussion and to inform the group of their own opinions at the very beginning. Possibly, the outcome of the study could have been predicted beforehand<sup>33</sup>.

In his attempt to put Janis's thesis on a stronger social psychological basis, 't Hart argues that first of all, group cohesiveness may be beneficial for group decision making as communication among group members will be more positive, frequent, and intense: moreover, several studies show a large problem-solving capacity of small groups<sup>34</sup>. Second, he suggests that group cohesiveness can be the product of different sources: it can be based on functional or emotional interdependence between group members, on a conflict with an out-group, on the high prestige a group is enjoying, or on the focus of groupmembers on their leader<sup>35</sup>. It is implicitly suggested that cohesiveness may operate through various mechanisms. Functional interdependence points to the influence of organizational structures that may play a role; emotional interdependence seems much closer to Janis's original conception in which the group provides emotional stability to individual members in a situation of high stress. Finally, if

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<sup>32</sup> J.A. Courtwright, Groupthink and Communication Processes: An Initial Investigation, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa, quoted in Jeanne Longley and Dean G. Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', pp. 82-83. Longley and Pruitt find the evidence in Courtwright's study inconclusive because of flaws in its research design; Matie L. Flowers, 'A Laboratory Test of Some Implications of Janis's Groupthink Hypothesis', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, (35), 12, 1977, pp. 888-896.

<sup>33</sup> Longley and Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', p. 83; Philip E. Tetlock, 'Identifying Victims of Groupthink from Public Statements of Decision Makers', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, (37), 8, 1979, p. 1316.

<sup>34</sup> 't Hart, Groupthink in Government, pp. 37-38.

<sup>35</sup> 't Hart, ibid., pp. 34-36.

cohesiveness is linked with hierarchical relations within the group, then the potential role of high status members, and in particular the group's leader becomes important.

All this adds up to saying that cohesiveness is neither a necessary, nor a sufficient condition for groupthink to occur. It may contribute to the phenomenon, but the precise interaction with other variables remains to be specified<sup>36</sup>.

3. The role of leadership. Despite the inconclusive evidence from laboratory experiments, it seems attractive by intuition to pay attention to the potential influence of leadership within the group. Leaders may impose their definition of the problem on the group and may structure the debate in such a way that no open discussion becomes possible. Fodor and Smith tried to account for differences in the quality of decisionmaking between various small groups by assessing the relative influence of groupcohesiveness and leadership<sup>37</sup>. Directive leadership was defined by making use of the so-called Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) for measuring an individual's need for power<sup>38</sup>. Cohesion among group members was established by promising a reward to the group, in terms of free theater tickets, if it performed best. It was found that groups with leaders who scored low on dominance performed consistently better than groups with highly dominant leaders, irrespective of their level of cohesion.

Although Fodor and Smith, unlike Flowers and Courtwright, used a correct research design with control groups, one has to remain doubtful about what these laboratory experiments actually mean for an analysis of real-world foreign policy decision making in small groups. Even if one accepts that the prospect of earning free theater tickets will be enough to create high cohesiveness among group members<sup>39</sup>, it is hard to accept this research design as resembling Janis's groupthink-hypothesis. First, it is hard to imagine that the task that was assigned to the various experimental groups (a company's decision whether or not to

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<sup>36</sup> Longley and Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', p. 81.

<sup>37</sup> Eugene M. Fodor and Terry Smith, 'The Power Motive as an Influence on Group Decision Making', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, (42), 1, 1982, pp. 178-185.

<sup>38</sup> The framework of TAT measure-analysis has been developed by D.G. Winter in his The Power Motive, The Free Press, New York, 1973. In Fodor and Smith's study an individual's high need for power was given operational definition by making use of power imagery when looking at eight different pictures; Fodor and Smith, p. 181.

<sup>39</sup> Fodor and Smith emphasize that it is unlikely that the participants of the experiment had been acquainted with one another, as they were picked randomly from 3,500 undergraduate students; Fodor and Smith, 'The Power Motive', pp. 180-181. It might have been better look for closely acquainted cliques of groups to constitute the high cohesive groups.

market a microwave oven) resembles the stressful situations of Janis's policy studies<sup>40</sup>. Second, the precise mechanism by which the leader's influence is exercised, remains unclear<sup>41</sup>. It appears that this factor operates especially through the way the decision making process is structured. This theme will be picked up shortly.

4. The place of politics in groupthink theory. Small groups that are confronted with a decisional problem are regularly described as responding to an sudden, external threat as if they were waiting for it in some kind of vacuum. However, an individual's perception of threat is determined not only by the external stimulus, but by domestic political considerations and by the institutional framework in which he, and the group he belongs to, is operating<sup>42</sup>. Undoubtedly, these individual aspects of threat perception will have some bearing on the way they perform in a small group. It must make a difference whether group members are cohesive by affiliation or by function. Groups that are functionally interdependent may be ridden with divisions based on divisions between several branches of the organization that are brought together in the group. In either case, a formal or informal hierarchy among group-members may exist. On the whole, therefore, a study of small group decision making should not only look for the interests all members have in common in finding a correct solution posed by an external problem, but should also pay attention to conflicting interests that may exist between group-members, which might find their origin in domestic or organizational politics.

#### The structuring of decisionmaking

The groupthink phenomenon, redefined as premature or early concurrence-seeking, refers to a procedural phenomenon. Both cohesion and leadership may contribute to what amounts to reaching agreement too soon. Longley and Pruitt claim that the impression among group members that a norm has been formulated is an essential ingredient of premature concurrence-seeking. They claim that both the timing of the decision to act is important and the presence of a dominating faction within the group are essential elements in accounting for

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<sup>40</sup> Fodor and Smith concede this dissimilarity, 'The Power Motive', p. 184.

<sup>41</sup> Fodor and Smith, *ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>42</sup> Janice Gross Stein, 'Building Politics into Psychology: The Misperception of Threat', *Political Psychology*, (9), 2, 1988, pp. 261-262; Stein complains of the 'strikingly apolitical' character of much psychological analysis, p. 245; a recent attempt is Maoz's analysis of tactics of political manipulation that are applied in group decision making, Zeev Maoz, 'Framing the National Interest. The Manipulation of Foreign Policy Decisions in Group Settings', *World Politics*, (43), 1, 1990, pp. 77-110.

early concurrence-seeking<sup>43</sup>. Three factors seem relevant to setting the stage for early concurrence-seeking: the number of group members, anticipation of external threat, and the attitude of group leader(s).

1. Number of participants. On the whole, the larger the group, the more likely it is that discussion will be monopolized by an increasingly smaller number of participants<sup>44</sup>. It has been suggested that an optimum number of participants exists, ranging between four and seven, that would serve to avoid the domination of discussion by a small number of participants. At the same time, 20 is sometimes referred to as the maximum number of participants if any decision is to be reached at all. In government, however, if many different views are to be heard from various interests, the number is not easily limited to seven. Meetings of the National Security Council in the United States nowadays have 12-15 participants. The number supposedly allows for both secrecy and the inclusion of relevant agencies and experts<sup>45</sup>. It is therefore crucial to make a distinction between active and passive members of a small decision making unit. The active members will establish and eventually legitimize the course of action to be followed.

2. Anticipation of threat. Experimental research from social psychology suggests that it makes a difference whether participants enter a small group meeting with clear ideas in mind about the nature of the problem and what should be done about it, or without having formulated an articulate opinion on the issue. Individuals who are asked after their opinion before entering the group setting, are much more active in the group and will conform to a group norm only after lengthy discussion. Those individuals, however, that participated at a group meeting without having been explicitly asked to pronounce their opinion beforehand, reached consensus much faster and without elaborate discussion<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Longley and Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', p. 81.

<sup>44</sup> Eugene Burnstein and Michael L. Berbaum, 'Stages in Group Decision Making: The Decomposition of Historical Narratives', *Political Psychology*, (4), 3, 1983, p. 552. They refer to research conducted by R.F. Bales, who found that in an eight-persons group, five participants would account for 5% of communications initiated, the most active participant initiating 40% of group communications, the second most active 20%, and the third most active 15%. It is suggested that this tendency will only be reinforced in large organizations, as most experiments were conducted among peers, among whom status differences were less pressing. Interaction/Process Analysis: A Method for the Study of Small Groups, Addison Wesley, Cambridge MA, 1950.

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan N. Roberts, Decision-Making during International Crises, Macmillan Press, Houndmills, 1988, pp. 116-118.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Bettenhausen and J. Keith Murnighan, 'The Emergence of Norms in Competitive Decision-Making Groups', Administrative Science Quarterly, (30), 1985, pp. 354-355.

The development of norms within a small group is thus contingent on opinions previously held by its participants as well as on chance: when the news broke that Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal Company, Eden was in the middle of a dinner in the honour of the King of Iraq. A first crisis meeting was held after the party had been interrupted. It is therefore not unlikely that the dynamics of that first meeting were partly depending on the fact that, presumably, not all participants at that meeting had well-prepared ideas about the probability of such a situation, and of its implications. At the same time, chance determined the composition of that small group, as those members of the Government that were present at the function were included, next to those that could be found in London instantly<sup>47</sup>. It is implied that anticipation of an external threat is an important consideration when analyzing the first small group meeting.

3. The attitude of group leader(s). If group composition and anticipation are important factors, the attitude of the group leader is even more relevant in structuring the decision making process. The fundamental problem is whether the group leader is contained by formally or informally established procedures and norms that regulate the group process<sup>48</sup>. Absence of such devices may allow the leader to impose his own perception on the group. This may be detrimental especially when first discussions are started with a statement by the group's leader as it is likely to structure the group's definition of the situation<sup>49</sup>. It should be emphasized, however, that one should not focus one's attention on the formal group leader only. The presence of high status group members seems to be as important: the initial decision in early 1961 to launch an invasion in the Bay of Pigs resulted from an early endorsement of the idea by high status group members<sup>50</sup>.

In sum, it should be admitted that Janis's theory of groupthink is still deficient in certain regards. He has remained imprecise about the exact causal chain that explains why a

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. Roberts, Decision-Making in International Crises, p. 119.

<sup>48</sup> Janis, Groupthink, pp. 249-250.

<sup>49</sup> George, Presidential Decisionmaking, pp. 101-103; Roberts, Decision Making in International Crises, pp. 125 ff. It should be added that the decision rule that is eventually adopted can also severely affect both the information processing, the appraisal of information and the actual policy outcome. Unanimity may result in vague compromises after costly bargaining; majority rule may create bitterness and hostility among the minority group. A third possibility is that it is left to the group's leader to use his way of conducting a session as a method of reaching consensus among the participants, while not using any formal decision rule at all. This point serves to underline the crucial position of a group's leader; George, *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>50</sup> These were two CIA representatives, whom had been given a privileged position during the discussion; Longley and Pruitt, 'Groupthink. A Critique of Janis's Theory', p. 82.



small group engages in early concurrence-seeking and thus in deficient decision making. The interrelationship of group cohesiveness and group leadership has remained unclear. It seems that group cohesiveness may explain much less than Janis anticipated. Finally, the importance of power relations within the group may be a factor of influence.

#### 6.4 't Hart's Refinements

Groupthink has become a popular theme in analyses of foreign policy decision making. Unfortunately, many of those studies did not go beyond the point of looking for the presence of symptoms of groupthink and of evidence that defective decision making had taken place. It has been argued above that the incompleteness of real-world studies of groupthink is partly due to flaws in Janis's original statement of the theory. Only recently, an effort has been made, first, to ground groupthink properly on insights from social psychology, and second, to incorporate politics into the model<sup>51</sup>. One could distinguish between five different types of improvement that 't Hart has thus added to a theory of Groupthink: (1) A distinction between three different pathways to groupthink, (2) the addition of two new elements of defective decision making (risktaking and entrapment) as well as (3) a new antecedent condition (intergroup conflict), (4) a differentiation between groups that are more or less likely to fall prey to groupthink, and (5) the formulation of two distinct types of groupthink, one resulting in collective avoidance of imminent disaster, the other producing collective overoptimism about the feasibility of a potentially disastrous policy alternative.

1. Three distinct pathways to groupthink. On the basis of the experimental literature of social psychology, 't Hart finds that cohesiveness may not be a necessary condition to the occurrence of premature concurrence-seeking at all. He suggests that Janis's original theory, that spoke of group cohesiveness as the cause of groupthink, is but one of three different causal chains leading to early concurrence-seeking.

A second cause of groupthink lies in processes of deindividuation. This term is used to explain extreme behaviour by collectivities, both crowds and small groups<sup>52</sup>. It refers to an individual's loss of self-awareness and self-identity, when individuals become too closely connected with the group. As a consequence, the individual is less able to be aware of his own behaviour, does not obey personal or social standards, and is thus unlikely to correct it, and more prone to react to immediate stimuli, emotions and motivations. Originally, this was

explained by anonymous individuals entering large crowds, but of late deindividuation has been observed in small groups that have no bonds with the outsiders they react against<sup>53</sup>.

A third cause of groupthink is a tendency for groupmembers, who experience high internal or external stress, to start looking for strong leaders among group members. This is more likely to occur, when clear decision making procedures are absent, or when the formal leader does not display sufficient leadership<sup>54</sup>.

Unfortunately, despite this attempt to take the emphasis of groupthink away from group-cohesiveness, it is not that easy to disconnect these three pathways to groupthink. According to me, both deindividuation and a search for leadership remain two causal factors that are closely related to groupcohesiveness, in spite of 't Hart's claim that 'each one is in itself a sufficient "cause" of groupthink'<sup>55</sup>. First of all, in his discussion of deindividuation 't Hart can only connect this notion, that had been developed for individual behaviour in large crowds, to small group decision-making by linking it to group-cohesiveness: a highly cohesive group makes it more likely that an individual will take the group as a point of reference rather than his individual traits<sup>56</sup>. It has thus become impossible to see deindividuation as a separate cause of groupthink.

Second, the third pathway to groupthink, a search for strong leadership under circumstances of high stress, seems still intimately linked to group-cohesiveness. At an earlier stage in his study, 't Hart distinguished between concurrence-seeking based on compliance (the individual obeys commands and rules), identification (the individual conforms because he needs to preserve valued relationships with influencing group members), and internalization (individual compliance because his value system parallels the leader's)<sup>57</sup>. If, when under stress, individual group members start looking for a strong leader, then they are identifying their individual survival with the survival of the group, and the latter's survival with the decisive act of a leader. Group-cohesiveness has thus re-entered the picture.

Despite the distinction between three pathways to groupthink, the crucial role of cohesion remains the pivot of the analysis. As such, Janis's formulation of the causal flow of groupthink-theory has not seriously challenged. Of course, leadership can be a significantly

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<sup>53</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, pp. 65-70.

<sup>54</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>55</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>56</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>57</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

different factor leading to groupthink, if conceived as the directive attitude of a group's formal or informal leader.

Fortunately, by introducing compliance 't Hart is able to account for this phenomenon. He correctly observes that several reasons can be thought to explain an individual's conformity to the group: he may accept the group's system of values completely (internalization); he may be interested in maintaining valuable contacts with important group members (identification), or he may simply obey the group's leader (compliance)<sup>58</sup>. This makes the attitude of a group's leader a crucial factor, as he determines to a large extent the agenda, the number of participants and the flow of information and advice<sup>59</sup>. Unfortunately, 't Hart does not separate 'the search for leadership under stress', a phenomenon closely related to group cohesiveness, from compliance. Instead, he heads both under 'anticipatory compliance', which seems the most important factor in his explanation of the Iran-Contra affair. Nevertheless, both types of conformity reflect different processes: the former, 'search for leadership', an emotional investment in the group, the latter, 'compliance', a calculated individual interest in participating in the group.

2. New elements of defective decision-making. According to 't Hart, risktaking and entrapment are the main dangers that small groups which engage in early concurrence-seeking are likely to fall prey to. The former consequence is likely to occur in single decisionmaking situations. The latter is related to recurring decisionmaking situations<sup>60</sup>.

Risktaking. The introduction of risktaking (and of recklessness) is based on a review of the experimental literature of social psychology. It has indeed often been suggested that groups are more prepared to take risks than individuals. Two types of explanations are usually offered<sup>61</sup>: on the one hand, it could be that dominant participants of a group have higher risktaking attitudes than other group members. Group risk taking would thus be explained by

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<sup>58</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 168-174; 't Hart argues that this pattern of anticipatory compliance with a leader may actually lead to groupthink, if the leader is firmly accepted by the group, if the rules of interaction leave it to the leader to set the agenda, if external conditions make individual participants look for a leader, if a basic policy consensus exists, if the group is confronted with external opposition, and if the group perceives its struggle with other groups as a zero/sum game (pp. 177-178, 199-201). Curiously, however, the 1962 Cuban missile crisis seems to fit the first four of these conditions, and possibly the last one, yet counts as a success story.

<sup>60</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, pp. 118-119, 124-126; he speaks of 'one off' and 'multi-decision' situations.

<sup>61</sup> Andrew K. Semmel, 'Small Groups Dynamics in Foreign Policymaking', in Gerald W. Hoppo (ed.), Biopolitics, Political Psychology and International Politics, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1982, pp. 101-102; cf. George, Presidential Decisionmaking, pp. 96-97.

individuals conforming to direct pressure. On the other hand, it could be argued that a group is inclined to take more risks because responsibility for the decision will lie with the group as a whole rather than with the individual participant. For the individual it is thus much less painful to go along with a risk-involving action<sup>62</sup>. Both explanations are examples of the most well-known effect of small group dynamics, that is, that in the course of a decision process individuals will give up their private opinion and will conform to the norm that has meanwhile emerged within the group as a whole<sup>63</sup>. It is not necessarily the case that groups will become highly risktaking. In general, the group process tends to reinforce the pre-existing beliefs of groupmembers. Riskavoiding-oriented individuals will stimulate an even more riskavoiding group; risktaking individuals will be reinforced in their attitudes during the group process<sup>64</sup>. Either outcome may produce defective decisionmaking: excessive riskavoidance may make it impossible to deal with external threats, while excessive risktaking will cause decisionmakers to ignore contradicting evidence.

**Entrapment.** This refers to the tendency to hang on to a previous decision in spite of decision makers' awareness of the availability of information that would make them reconsider the adopted course of action. Both risktaking and entrapment are to a certain extent part of Janis's symptoms of defective decisionmaking<sup>65</sup>. It is to 't Hart's credit to have made a distinction between those situations in which risktaking will be a danger, and those in which entrapment is likely to occur.

3. **Intergroup conflict as antecedent condition.** As a correction to Janis's emphasis on external and internal stress as indicator of a provocative situational context, 't Hart discusses another situational factor, that is, the relation of the small group with other groups in the operational environment. Groupthink is more likely to occur if the decision making group is part of an intergroup environment that is characterized by strong competition between groups.

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<sup>62</sup> A variant of this line of reasoning holds that individuals will tend to shift their opinion towards the opinion of the person they feel accountable to, thus allowing for the possibility that some members of lower status in a group will tend to adopt the position of their superiors. For an experiment, see Philip E. Tetlock, 'Accountability and Complexity of Thought', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, (45), 1, 1983, pp. 74-83.

<sup>63</sup> This is called the 'Choice-shift' phenomenon, Semmel, 'Small Groups Dynamics', p. 94. Groupthink is another example of the same phenomenon.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., the experiment on foreign policy orientations, conducted by Semmel, 'Small Group Dynamics', pp. 100-111. And the literature discussed by 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government*, esp. p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Janis, *Groupthink*, p. 244: entrapment would be covered by the failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives.

Intergroup conflict will make it more probable that group cohesion is increased, especially when success is anticipated, or that individual group members will start looking for a strong leader<sup>66</sup>. Although the existence of intergroup conflict may be an important factor in understanding the occurrence of premature concurrence-seeking, the exact place of group-cohesiveness remains unspecified. Apparently, intergroup conflict will enhance group cohesiveness and thus contribute to groupthink. However, as 't Hart notes himself, it is still unclear whether intergroup behaviour stimulates group-cohesiveness, or highly cohesive groups tend to engage in competition with other groups<sup>67</sup>.

4. Likely victims of groupthink. It has remained implicit in Janis's groupthink theory that the phenomenon seems relevant to only certain types of decision making units rather than others. The very fact that most case studies come from major foreign policy decisions suggests that groupthink is relevant to non-routine situations. It is therefore worthwhile asking to which extent small groups dealing with such situations actually occur in government nowadays. 't Hart argues that small groups will be the most important decision making units only rarely: these situations will probably relate to long term policy planning, project management, crisis management, and the dealing with highly politicized issues<sup>68</sup>. On the whole, governmental groups are unlikely to display strong cohesion. Bargaining and conflict between groups seems to be the case due to departmental or political divisions<sup>69</sup>.

5. Two types of groupthink. The final contribution of 't Hart to a refinement of Janis's Groupthink-theory is his distinction between two different types of groupthink. Both, of course, are characterized by premature concurrence-seeking, but each has a distinct flavour: one can be called collective avoidance, the other collective overoptimism. Either may result in excessive risktaking or entrapment. This analysis is grounded in an innovative aspect, the perception of the group by the individual participant. Assuming that weightier decisions, will be more consequential for decisionmakers, 't Hart claims that an individual group member will calculate his behaviour on the basis of his expectation of the outcome of the decision. If an individual participant expects a fiasco, he will be motivated not be associated with the decision. If he expects a success, he will be motivated to be part of it, and thus to cooperate<sup>70</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> 't Hart, *ibid.*, chapter 7, esp. pp. 105-111.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 151-155.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 181-182.

Both motivations are the basis for two different types of early concurrence-seeking. In the case of collective avoidance (or 'groupthink I'), the lack of opposition stems from an individual calculus of personal interest. Individual participants remain silent, or leave sessions, because they do not want to become associated with failure. In the case of collective overoptimism (or 'groupthink II'), it is in the individual's interests to be identified with the likely success of the adopted policy. 't Hart hypothesizes that this latter form of groupthink is triggered by the perception of opportunity, such as honeymoon periods of new Administrations, the planning of big projects and military contingencies, while the former is provoked by crisis situations, small groups are suddenly confronted with<sup>71</sup>.

The significant suggestion then is that outcomes at the group-level can be explained by individual calculations related to the way that their position or prestige will be affected by their affiliation with the group's policy<sup>72</sup>. However, it still has to be shown to which extent this weakens Janis's argument.

't Hart illustrates his point in explaining the silence of Director of Central Intelligence Admiral Turner when the Carter Administration decided to go ahead with the operation that was supposed to rescue American hostages in Tehran in April 1980. Turner was in possession of a CIA-report that was highly critical of the operational plan. 't Hart argues that Turner did not speak up because it was far more secure for him and his organization 'not to rock the boat'<sup>73</sup>: because the CIA was not directly involved either in planning the rescue mission or in its execution, it would not be held accountable for its -probable- failure.

For two reasons, his account is not completely persuasive. First of all, from the point of view of individual calculus, it could be said that Turner did have an interest in securing the success of the mission. It was known that Carter had personally drawn the issues of the hostages into the political arena<sup>74</sup>. Part of the perceived pressure to act was grounded in

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<sup>71</sup> ibid., pp. 184-191.

<sup>72</sup> Curiously, 't Hart is thus not far from those students of public administration that try to explain collective behaviour (of organizations, or groups) with individual choice. E.g., R.H. Lieshout and J.K. de Vree, 'How Organizations Decide', Acta Politica, (20), 2, 1985, pp. 129-155.

<sup>73</sup> 't Hart, Groupthink in Government, p. 187.

<sup>74</sup> Betty Glad, 'Personality, Political and Group Process Variables in Foreign Policy Decision-Making: Jimmy Carter's Handling of the Iranian Hostage Crisis', International Political Science Review, (10), 1, 1989, pp. 53-57; Cf. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Power and Principle. Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981, (second, revised edition), Farrar, New York, 1985 (1983), pp. 490-491, and Steve Smith, 'Groupthink and the Hostage Rescue Mission', British Journal of Political Science, (15), 1, 1984, pp. 118-119.

electoral considerations<sup>75</sup>. Failure of the mission could ruin Carter's chances to be re-elected. It is known that Turner wanted to remain Director of the C.I.A.<sup>76</sup>, and thus had an interest in Carter's re-election. It could be argued that Turner thought that not being associated with failure gave him the best chance of surviving an electoral victory of both Carter and Reagan. According to me, this could only explain his silence after the initial decision to bring matters to a head, as the best way to secure his position under such circumstances. It does not explain why Turner did not back Vance in his opposition against a rescue mission at the crucial meeting of 7 April 1980, when Carter first said that he wanted action.

The second reason why the account is unpersuasive, is the presence of many elements of processes at the group-level: according to Brzezinski's account, during the following meetings at which the implementation of the rescue plan was discussed, Turner did speak about aspects of implementation<sup>77</sup>, that is, despite his knowledge of the critical C.I.A.-report, thus representing, what Janis calls, a self-appointed mindguard. Moreover, 't Hart shows that Turner felt that his opposition would disturb the growing sense of faith in the mission, and that his criticism would probably not change the probable decision anyhow<sup>78</sup>. Both considerations are perfect examples of what Janis has called self-censorship and illusion of unanimity: Turner's calculations were a product of his perception of an emerged consensus among the other participants. Such calculations cannot explain why he did not speak up at the earlier, crucial meeting when Vance opposed Carter's suggestion to bring matters to a head.

The relationship between individual calculations and group-processes is thus complicated and remains an undeveloped theme. The crucial point, however, is that even if some members of a small group do not want to be associated with what they expect to be a certain fiasco, and thus will remain silent or leave the group, it must have been the case that the remaining members of the group have fallen prey to overoptimism. That is, the two distinct types of groupthink cannot be two separated types. Theoretically, it is possible that a decision is taken by a group, some members of which have calculated that their interest lies with not being associated with it, because of perceived failure, while all others have calculated that their

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<sup>75</sup> Although, it should be added, President had developed a kind of personal identification with hostage problem.

<sup>76</sup> Bob Woodward, Veil. The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987, Pocket Books, New York etc., 1987, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Brzezinski, Power and Principle, p. 493.

<sup>78</sup> Stansfield Turner, Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1985, quoted by 't Hart, Groupthink in Government, p. 187.

interest lies with being associated with it because they perceive outstanding success. It is very hard, however, to imagine that no discussion will take place and it must be assumed that at least some members will speak out, if only because calculated individual silence presumes the perception of an emerged consensus among optimists, as we saw in the case of Turner.

By pointing to individuals' potential vested interests, 't Hart has made an important contribution to the understanding of individual behaviour during the meetings of small groups. The presence of such individual calculations of interests, however, do not preclude the operation of processes at the group level, such as groupthink. It may thus be true that the behaviour of some participants are better explained by individual calculations rather than their sense of belonging to a group, but the actual outcome still presumes processes of groupthink among the rest of the participants, unless one accepts that small groups may decide without their members having said one word.

### 6.5 Conclusions and implications

It can thus be safely stated that premature concurrence-seeking can be observed in small groups and that this is possibly linked with defective decisionmaking. It has been shown, however, that early concurrence-seeking may stem from several analytically distinct sources. One is high group-cohesiveness, the originally formulated factor that explains groupthink. However, early concurrence-seeking may also be explained by what 't Hart has labelled anticipatory compliance of lower status group members with the suggestions of their leader. In principle, then, a different cause has been traced, although one should be careful with employing the concept of leadership: the search for leadership that is based on the satisfaction of emotional needs under stress, may well reflect and reinforce processes of high group-cohesiveness. In practice, however, high group cohesion and the preponderance of higher status group members will operate simultaneously, as it will be difficult to find a small decision making group in government that consists of members of exactly the same status.

The principal implication is, therefore, that due attention should be paid to the role of formal and/or informal leaders within a small group<sup>79</sup>. The crucial role played by leadership once more underlines the importance of individual cognitive beliefs. If the attitude of high

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<sup>79</sup> Of course, this is not that innovative, given Janis's considerations of the influence of leadership on concurrence-seeking. The novelty, given 't Hart's analysis, is that, in theory at least, relations of compliance suggest a different kind of group process, namely meek obedience, while Janis's original theory tried to explain a phenomenon that resembled the identification of the individual with the group. That's why, of course, Janis treated leadership as an intervening factor, rather than an independent variable that might make the relationship between cohesion and concurrence-seeking spurious.



status members is that essential, one should know their views in order to understand the dynamics and outcome of the decisionmaking process.

A second implication is the need to develop an analytical model that takes the structure of the decisionmaking process into account. 't Hart made an important distinction between 'one-off' and 'multi-decision'-situations. The implications of such considerations still have to be developed: for instance, it seems that each 'multi-decision'-situation has been preceded by a 'one-off'-situation first; policy makers must have decided to do or not to do something before a situation in which more decisions have to be taken, will emerge. Both entrapment and risktaking may therefore be at the heart of the same policy fiasco. A theory of decision making is therefore needed to develop these considerations. So far, only Irving Janis and Leon Mann have offered one that takes social psychological constraints comprehensively into account<sup>80</sup>.

However, before a model of decisionmaking can be applied, one needs to have a clear view of the crucial decision(s) one wants to explain. I believe that the debate around Janis's groupthink syndrome, and especially around the relative weight of groupcohesiveness, has obscured an important aspect of his approach, that is, one of the reasons why one can be puzzled by small group decision making. Originally, Janis's curiosity was aroused by his observation that in some foreign policy making groups a disastrous policy was embarked upon despite the awareness of participants of knowledge that, if tabled, would have prevented them from taking the wrong direction. Sometimes the correct piece of information would even be tabled, and not only once, without being picked up by the participants<sup>81</sup>. I believe that students of groupthink should go back to the puzzles that bothered them in the first place. Unfortunately, this is easily forgotten; Barrett's critique of Janis's treatment of the Johnson Administration's decision to escalate the Vietnam War as a case in which groupthink theory may serve as an example. Barrett is completely unaware of the fact that the real puzzle is not the question why President Johnson chose to go ahead with his policies, despite of the private warnings of close associates that further escalation would be disastrous. Rather, the relevant question is why the small cohesive group around Johnson, the 'Tuesday Lunch Group', persisted in its belief that an escalation of the war would bring a solution, despite the availability of information that suggested the contrary. If the latter is the initial problem, then Barrett's account of the warnings of six associates of Johnson only reinforces the original

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<sup>80</sup> Janis and Mann, *Decision Making*; Janis has elaborated this decisionmaking model: Irving L. Janis, 'Problems of International Crisis Management in the Nuclear Age', *Journal of Social issues*, (42), 2, 1986, pp. 201-220; Janis, *Crucial Decisions*.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Janis, *Groupthink*, p. vii.

puzzle and the potential power of groupthink theory: two individuals who sent warning signals to Johnson, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and intimate Clark Clifford, were present at several meetings of the Tuesday Lunch Group: Janis persuasively shows how these dissenters were 'domesticated', thus making their points look irrelevant<sup>82</sup>. It is therefore of utmost importance to formulate well one's research questions.

The Suez crisis may be an example of a case to which small group dynamics can be relevant. The British Cabinet appointed a small group of Ministers, the so-called Egypt Committee, to deal with the crisis. The most poignant question is their failure to anticipate American opposition to an Anglo-French intervention, despite the abundance of evidence. Small group processes may thus provide an alternative explanation to individual cognitive beliefs. For two reasons, however, individual and group variables might be complementary rather than mutually exclusive. First, the influential role of leadership in small group settings suggests that the leader's cognitive beliefs will affect the group's decision: the more the group is characterized by directive leadership, the more important the individual's belief system will be. Second, research on small group processes suggested that small groups tend to reinforce its members' preexisting beliefs. It will therefore be necessary to have an idea of the general orientation of policy makers to the problem before the actual decision making process starts<sup>83</sup>. The interplay between individual belief systems and small group processes should therefore be part of the analysis.

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<sup>82</sup> David M. Barrett, 'The Mythology Surrounding Lyndon Johnson, His Advisers, and the 1956 Decision to Escalate the Vietnam War', Political Science Quarterly, (103), 4, 1988, pp. 637-663; Janis, Groupthink, p. 115.

<sup>83</sup> Brecher emphasizes this aspect, when he urges to compose the policy makers' attitudinal prism.

**PART III:**  
**FORERUNNERS OF SUEZ: ATTITUDINAL PRISM AND OPERATIONAL CODE**

### Introduction to Part III

In parts I and II it was argued that neorealism cannot give a sufficient understanding of the crucial case of Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956. First, an analysis of the Anglo-American security regime between 1945 and 1951 demonstrated the need to incorporate perceptions and expectations of foreign policymakers. In order to understand certain phenomena, at the level of both foreign policy making and the international system, cognitive belief systems of political elites may be a crucial tool of analysis.

Second, the Suez crisis, considered an obvious case in neorealist theory, displays several puzzling aspects that reinforce the suggestion that perceptions and expectations of politicians have to be taken into account if the actual operation of systemic constraints is to be fully understood. Two questions come to mind. First, the curious British decision to move back into an area that they had agreed to leave only two years before the crisis on the grounds that there was no compelling strategic reason to stay; actually, they had left the area shortly before the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company. Why did the British consider it worthwhile to go back in there?

The second puzzling question that has to be answered is the persistent lack of British perceptiveness of the American attitude towards the use of force as an answer to the Egyptian challenge. America's opposition to military action had seemed clear in President Eisenhower's messages to the British Prime Minister and in his press conferences throughout the crisis as well. Moreover, the British Cabinet itself had deemed it impossible to exert effective pressure on Egypt, either economically, politically, or militarily, without the full support of the United States. Why then did it decide in favour of military intervention if that support would not be forthcoming?

In Part III it will be examined to what extent tools from cognitive psychology can offer an understanding of Anglo-American relations that is complementary to neorealism. It will be shown that the answers to the puzzle of the Suez crisis find their origin, on the one hand, in the cognitive belief system of Sir Anthony Eden, and, on the other hand, in the perceptions and expectations of British policymakers that were grounded in the dynamics of the Anglo-American security regime between 1945 and 1955. The analysis of the Suez crisis will be based on two independent and two constraining variables. Because British decision making during the Suez crisis was confined to a limited number of policy makers at the highest level, it is assumed that bureaucratic politics will play a less influential role, and that thus an analysis should give more weight to individual and group factors. Suez will therefore be analysed with

individual cognitive beliefs and small group dynamics as independent variables. Considerations of domestic politics and the organizational context will be treated as variables that may constrain the decision making process, and serve to control the individual and group variable.

Irving Janis's groupthink syndrome will be employed to assess the influence of small group dynamics. It will be shown that, at various stages, three small groups have counted as the central decision making unit: first, the full Cabinet, second, a crisis unit, the so-called Egypt Committee, that was formally appointed to deal with the crisis, and, third, an inner circle of senior Ministers who met informally on a regular basis.

The role of individual cognitive beliefs will be examined by making use of part of the Brecher-model as well as of the Operational Code construct. The Brecher-model stresses the potential influence of policymakers' general orientation to world politics, the so-called attitudinal prism, on the decision making process. In chapter 7 the Anglo-American security regime between 1951 and 1955 will be considered the attitudinal prism of British foreign policymakers. It is grounded in the perceptions and expectations shaped by Anglo-American relations in the immediate postwar period, and will serve to make the British attitude towards the United States and the Middle East in 1956 more intelligible.

The Operational Code construct will be used assess the influence of an individual's cognitive belief system on decision making. This approach offers a classification of cognitive beliefs that may be of importance for the understanding of the conduct of foreign policy. Two of those beliefs that are the principal candidates for the label of master belief, which structures the individual's cognitive belief system. A comparative analysis of Operational Code studies has revealed that the 'image of the opponent' or the 'nature of the international system' are the beliefs most likely to dominate a politician's view of the world<sup>1</sup>. The likelihood that foreign policy makers may be re-grouped according to their master beliefs makes the Operational Code a potential tool of comparative analysis of foreign policy behaviour<sup>2</sup>.

The methodological advantage of the Operational Code over other techniques, such as Cognitive Mapping, is that it allows the researcher to formulate expectations about a politician's handling of a decision making situation on the basis of an analysis of the occurrence of previously meditated cognitive beliefs, while the latter can at best inductively

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<sup>1</sup> Ole R. Holsti, 'A Typology of "Operational Code" Belief Systems', paper presented to the 'Conference on Approaches to Decision-Making', Oslo, April 1977.

<sup>2</sup> It would thus fit the criteria of the method of 'focused comparison'; see chapter 1, footnote 43.

produce his considerations at that time<sup>3</sup>. Chapter 8 presents the Operational Code of Anthony Eden, based on his public and private utterances between 1924 and 1955. It should thus enable us to determine his worldview at the moment that the crisis starts, and to formulate expectations of his likely attitude towards the conflict.

An analysis of the influence of cognitive beliefs and small group dynamics relies on the presence of a crisis situation: first, a crisis situation reduces the influence of bureaucratic politics and enhances the role of beliefs and small groups. Second, a crisis situation tends to generate a high level of emotional stress, which in turn increases the possibility of the occurrence of early concurrence seeking as well as an individual's reliance on his master belief in order to assess the situation. In chapter 9, therefore, it will be discussed whether it is possible to determine the beginning of crisis situations and to observe an increase in the level of emotional stress among policymakers. This is followed by a discussion of its implications for an analysis of the Suez crisis. It will be argued that the Suez crisis should be subdivided into six crucial decisions, each of which should be analysed in terms of the independent and constraining variables that have been distinguished above. Such an analysis is subsequently carried out in Part IV<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The Brecher-model remains rather vague about the exact place of cognitive beliefs. This may be explained by the fact that the model is not meant to measure the relative influence of cognitive beliefs, but rather serves to understand the influence of crisis situations on the quality of the decision making process.

<sup>4</sup> Basically then, this study follows the so-called process-tracing procedure, which seeks to monitor how an actor's beliefs influence his receptivity to and interpretation of incoming information about the situation, his definition of the situation, his individuation of options, and his final choice of a course of action, George, 'The Causal Nexus Between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behavior', pp. 113-119. Another possibility would be to look for congruence between the content of given beliefs and the content of decisions. However, it would then become difficult to determine whether cognitive beliefs really influenced the outcome, or whether other variables like small group dynamics or bureaucratic politics could explain away the congruence, George, *ibid.*, pp. 105-113.

## Chapter 7: The Anglo-American security regime 1951-1955

### 7.1 Introduction

One of the valuable contributions of the Brecher-model to the analysis of crisis decision-making is its emphasis on the role of the psychological environment in which foreign policy makers are operating. This environment to a large extent determines what Brecher calls the attitudinal prism of policy makers, that is, their general orientation towards international politics. It is the contention of the present chapter that the British perception of what has been labelled the Anglo-American security regime between 1945 and 1951 forms the basis of the perception of officials of the Churchill Government (1951-1955) of Great Britain's role in the world in general and of her relations with the United States in particular. The perception of British policymakers that the Americans had accepted the Middle East as a British sphere of influence, which by 1951 still seemed an accurate perception, was the cause of an incorrect assessment of a changing American attitude towards British policies in the Middle East. As a matter of fact, the British were convinced that they could use the United States as a bogey-man in order to extract concessions from countries such as Egypt. It will be suggested that part of the answer to the puzzling question of why the British ignored American opposition to military action during the Suez crisis can be understood by their conviction that the game in the Middle East could still be played according to the rules of the Anglo-American security regime, despite signs of the opposite.

This chapter does not aim at a full analysis of the entire foreign policy of the Churchill Government, but will concentrate on those areas that are most relevant to the questions that guide empirical analysis: the British perception of American policy over Suez, and the British decision to move back into an area from which they had deemed it important to leave only two years earlier. In section 7.2 a general picture of Anglo-American relations between 1951 and 1955 will be sketched. Section 7.3 will deal with the Middle East more in detail, in particular with Anglo-American policies towards Iran, the Baghdad Pact, and Egypt. The concluding section 7.4 will spell out the implications of a 'security regime analysis' for an analysis of the Suez crisis.

### 7.2 Economic, strategic, and diplomatic dimensions of the regime

It was argued in chapter 3 that the Anglo-American security regime between 1945 and 1951 can be characterized by British economic dependency on the United States, which, however, did not result in a position of complete subordination, because of the amount of

strategic leverage the United Kingdom had over the United States, mainly grounded in an American dependency on British air fields for an effective implementation of its deterrence strategy. This strategic relationship was a source of British diplomatic influence. Economic decline was perceived to be a temporary phenomenon that would be restored with the help of trade with Commonwealth nations. Thus, by 1950, British policy makers were convinced to be back on the right track both economically and regarding influence as a great power. What remained of this optimistic vision, once Sir Winston Churchill had returned to 10, Downing Street in October 1951, accompanied by Sir Anthony Eden, who became Foreign Secretary for the third time in his career?

1. The economic dimension. The economic position of the United Kingdom in the early 1950s continued to be weak, despite Whitehall's prudent optimism of 1950. Britain had set her hopes on the development of a free trade area between Commonwealth and Empire nations in which Sterling would be the central currency<sup>1</sup>. However, the important problem of earning dollars in order to pay for essential imports could not be resolved by the creation of a Sterling trade area. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, R.A. Butler, travelled to the United States several times, hoping to obtain important tariff reductions from the Americans for the export of British products, but his efforts were of no avail. Shortage of dollars led to a balance of payments crisis in 1952, and Butler had to beg for swift American financial assistance: the Americans, however, were willing to provide only one third of the 900 million dollars that were needed<sup>2</sup>.

More importantly, Britain's economic weakness was intimately linked with its defence expenditures. Part of the deterioration of the British economy since 1950 (when the United Kingdom had a surplus in her balance of payments, even when accounting for Marshall Aid) was due to American pressure to participate in the rearmament process. At the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950, the United States had been surprised by her own military weakness. As a matter of fact, her nuclear superiority was its only means of deterring the Soviet Union from

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<sup>1</sup> Clark notes how the British developed certain psychological defences against this feeling of being economically dependent on the United States. One rationalization was to blame British economic weakness on the British war-effort, especially during 'the year we fought alone'. Secondly, a sentiment of contempt for American wealth emerged: 'I'd rather be poor and happy in England than rich and neurotic in America', William Clark, Less than Kin. A Study of Anglo-American Relations, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1957, pp. 149-150.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Boyle, 'The "Special Relationship" with Washington', in John W. Young (ed.), The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration 1951-1955, Leicester University Press, 1988, pp. 38-40.



interfering in the conflict<sup>3</sup>. The Truman Administration thus embarked on an impressive rearmament programme, and put strong pressure on its allies to join in. At the same time, the President introduced the Battle Act which linked American economic assistance to the cutting-off of trade with East bloc countries, which had been an important source of income for the United Kingdom<sup>4</sup>. In their visit to Washington on 7 January 1952 Churchill and Eden pointed out to President Truman and Secretary of State Dean Acheson that a further increase in the defence programme would put a heavy burden on the British economy<sup>5</sup>. At the end of that month Butler told Acheson that imminent balance-of-payments problems could make it difficult for Britain to carry out the present defence programme. In Lisbon in late February Eden repeated these complaints to Acheson<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, the British felt that an increase in defence industry would be detrimental to their export industries, thus increasing the shortage of dollars. The British therefore pressed the Americans for financial assistance if a sharp and immediate cut in the defence programme were to be avoided. They suggested that the Americans bought British warplanes (of the Canberra and Venom type) which Britain could then take out of her own defence programme, but the United States refused to do so<sup>7</sup>.

2. The strategic/geopolitical dimension. During the first three years of the Korean War it remained important for the United States not to be too hard to their British Allies, because they continued to need British bases for their strategic bomber force against the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup>. Apart from the diplomatic leverage the British obtained from this situation, its implication was American confirmation of continued British predominance over the Middle East. Well into 1954 the American National Security Council observed that '[e]ven though British and French influence in the Near East has declined, the United Kingdom retains substantial interests, experience, and security positions so that the United States will need to act in concert with the United Kingdom to the greatest extent possible', although it was ominously added that the United States should reserve 'the right to act with others (-) or alone': the United States was

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<sup>3</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, 'A "Wasting Asset": American Strategy and the Shifting Nuclear Balance, 1949-1954', International Security, (13), 3, 1988/1989, pp. 23-27.

<sup>4</sup> Vibeke Sorensen, 'Economic Recovery versus Containment: the Anglo-American Controversy over East-West Trade, 1947-1951', Cooperation and Conflict, (24), 1, 1989, pp. 88-90.

<sup>5</sup> FO 800/836.

<sup>6</sup> FO 800/836: US/52/20, US/52/25.

<sup>7</sup> FO 800/836, Foreign Office to Washington Embassy, telegram 1087, 10 March 1952.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Edmonds, Setting the Mould. The United States and Britain, 1945-1959, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 230-232.

increasingly aware that it would not always be prudent to rely on the British if it wanted to safeguard its interests: 'it is important to the settlement of outstanding political disputes that the U.S. convince the Arab states that it is capable of acting independently of other Western states and of Israel'<sup>9</sup>. Here lies the source of many British and American misunderstandings regarding policies towards the Middle East, as will soon become clear.

A second strategic asset that the United Kingdom had been developing for some time were its attempts to catch up with the United States and the Soviet Union in terms of nuclear weapons capacity. In October 1952 Great Britain had become a member of the atomic club and with the development of its Venom-bombers it had acquired a substantial deterrent of its own<sup>10</sup>. The joy over this newly found source of strength did not last very long. That same year the United States had exploded a hydrogen bomb, to be followed by the Soviet Union in 1953. Britain did not catch up until 1957. Moreover, the development of thermonuclear technology was to have a dramatic impact on the British assessment of the importance of Egypt and the Suez Canal Zone, serving as a catalyst of the British withdrawal from the area.

3. Diplomatic dimension. In chapter 3 it was argued that in the 1945-1951 period Great Britain managed to use its strengths on the strategic dimension to have some important diplomatic successes. The most clamorous result that the British stressed was Prime Minister Attlee dissuading the Truman Administration from using nuclear weapons in order to deter a Chinese intervention in the Korean war<sup>11</sup>. The experience of the Korean War gave a strong impetus to a feeling among British foreign policy officials that they could exert strong pressure on the United States if they played their cards well. In January 1951 the British successfully opposed the American idea to condemn the Chinese before the Security Council, while asking for 'additional measures', which would escalate the war, rather than bring it closer to a peaceful settlement. The American willingness to listen to their ally provoked the perception among important Foreign Policy officials<sup>12</sup> that the Americans could not do without the

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<sup>9</sup> NSC 155/1: 'US Objectives and Policies with Respect to the Near East', 14 July 1953, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954. Volume IX. The Near and Middle East. Part 1, U.S. Government Printing Office Washington, 1986 (editor in chief: John P. Glennan), pp. 400-401. The same analysis is repeated in NSC 5428, 23 July 1954, pp. 526, 529.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Edmonds, Setting the Mould, p. 230.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Dingman, 'Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War', International Security, (13), 3, 1988/1989, pp. 66-67; Dingman stresses the importance of the military's view of the tactical use of nuclear weapons as having a far greater weight than Attlee's hasty visit to Washington in November 1950.

<sup>12</sup> Notably, Permanent Under-Secretary Sir William Strang, and Minister of State Kenneth Younger.

British. In the Cabinet Kenneth Younger thought it important to draw the line here 'if we ever want to have real influence' with the United States<sup>13</sup>.

Under the Churchill Government the attitude of the United Kingdom still constrained the decisions of the Eisenhower Administration's Korea policy to a certain extent: in March 1953 one of the reasons why the Americans did not (yet) embark upon coercive nuclear diplomacy was British opposition to such a move and the disrupting consequences this would therefore have on NATO<sup>14</sup>. It will shortly be shown how the British tried to use their alliance with the Americans in the Korean War to obtain concessions from the Americans regarding British Middle East policies.

Despite these accomplishments over Korea, the period of the Churchill Government was characterized by an increasing number of important diplomatic defeats imposed by the Americans. First of all, Britain was actually humiliated by John Foster Dulles during the negotiations on the final peace treaty with Japan between 1950 and 1952<sup>15</sup>. Great Britain wanted the Japanese to be free to decide whether to recognize the Nationalist or the Communist Government of China. The United States insisted on the former, and the British opposed this suggestion as they wished to limit the growing American influence over Japan. In return, Dulles remarked that 'the British had to realize that their former Empire was a pathetic shell and that our help was essential to their survival'<sup>16</sup>.

A second, possibly more symbolic, example comes from Churchill's numerous attempts after Stalin's death in March 1953 to organize a conference of the Heads of States of the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom. Churchill was afraid that the Americans would exclude Britain, and him personally, from a summit with the new Soviet leadership. Such an absence would poignantly underline his country's decline as a world power, and Churchill therefore launched a proposal on 11 May 1953 before the Americans

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<sup>13</sup> See for this episode, Rosemary J. Foot, 'Anglo-American Relations in the Korean Crisis', pp. 53-56. Quote of Younger, from p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Dingman, 'Atomic Diplomacy during the Korean War', pp. 84-85.

<sup>15</sup> The Truman Administration had appointed Dulles United States negotiator in the rank of Ambassador.

<sup>16</sup> Howard Schonberger, 'Peacemaking in Asia: The United States, Great Britain, and the Japanese Decision to Recognize Nationalist China, 1951-52', *Diplomatic History*, (10), 1, 1986, pp. 59-74, quote from p. 68.

would seize the initiative. This and the other proposals he put forward throughout the rest of 1953 were consistently turned down by Eisenhower<sup>17</sup>.

On the whole then, it could be argued that the United Kingdom's position vis-a-vis the United States was weakening considerably in the early years of Churchill's Indian Summer, as it has been called. Economically, Great Britain was dependent on the United States more than ever. It still had some important strategic assets, and its preponderance over the Middle East was still recognized by the United States, but it was becoming much more difficult to change that strategic currency into diplomatic successes. Nevertheless, the crucial question is to what extent the British realized that the tide was changing, and what that implied for the American attitude towards their position in the Middle East. It will be shown that the British preferred to believe that the Americans would leave them a free hand in that area.

### 7.3 The Middle East 1951-5: diverging interests and perceptions

The United Kingdom continued perceiving the Middle East as her private sphere of influence, and remained convinced that this position of hers was being sanctioned by the United States. This attitude had several consequences. First, the British continued their attempts to further their own Middle East policy by using the Americans as a bogey-man versus the Arab states they had to deal with. At the same time, they played the old trick of pointing out the danger of Communist influence in the Middle East to the United States, the aversion of which would be dependent on a strong British position. British policymakers were therefore unable to learn from an important experience, namely, Anglo-American discord over Iran from 1951 to 1953: they refused to appreciate that the United States might have diverging interests and that they might pursue a policy that did not fully correspond to British interests. On the contrary, British experience with the American attitude over Iran caused a feeling of 'we should not allow them to treat us like that again'. As a matter of fact, despite warning signals that the United States might be in the course of developing a Middle East policy of its own, British policymakers continued relying on their traditional tactics.

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<sup>17</sup> M. Steven Fish, 'After Stalin's Death: The Anglo-American Debate Over a New Cold War', Diplomatic History, (10), 4, 1986, pp. 333-355, esp. pp. 336-337. The debate caused much alarm within the Churchill Government: Churchill seized the initiative after Eden had temporarily left the Foreign Office because of illness. Eden and Churchill had been fighting over the question of who was to handle foreign affairs since a long time. Eden did all he could to prevent Churchill from actually taking his seat by trying to resolve world problems by organizing a conference of three heads of state. Cf. Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez. Diaries 1951-56, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1986, pp. 89, 91-92, 105-108.

Second, British policymakers interpreted two important diplomatic outcomes, the conclusion of the Suez Canal Treaty with Egypt in 1954, and the foundation of the Baghdad Pact in the same year, as two more examples of their diplomatic brilliance. They were convinced to have cajoled the Americans into accepting arrangements that were first of all favourable to the interests of the United Kingdom, and remained unaware of the possibility that the United States might have interpreted these events in a radically different way.

Third, this inability to assess the American attitude towards the Middle East reinforced the dominant British interpretation of Arab nationalism. Traditionally, British policymakers held the view that almost any Arab regime that became hostile to British interests, could easily be substituted for with another.

Finally, and most important, the British perception that their privileged position in the Middle East was being approved by the United States, and their inability to appreciate significant changes in the American attitude, form two of the sources of their difficulty with understanding the American attitude towards Great Britain and France during the Suez crisis. They caused British decision makers to engage in several curious rationalizations of the policies of the Eisenhower Administration.

### 7.3.1 Iranian oil 1951-1953

The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (A.I.O.C.) was owned by British interests for 100%, and operated from the south-western Iranian city of Abadan, where the world's largest oil refinery was situated. In 1951 it produced the largest share of Middle East oil. It thus meant an important source of income for the British Government, who in 1950 received 40 million pounds from taxes alone. Its significance for the British economy became more evident after Iran nationalized the A.I.O.C. in 1951<sup>18</sup>: Great Britain had to buy its oil elsewhere, and worse, had to pay for it dollars, of which she possessed so few: this cost the United Kingdom about 40 million pounds a month<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> This occurred after negotiations to reach a more equitable division of net profits between Iran and British interests, along the lines of the ARAMCO oil agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia, proposing a 50/50 distribution, had failed.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Leitner, 'Iran's Attempt at Oil Nationalization, 1951-1953: Causes and Consequences', in Eyla Kadjar, a.o., Moyen-Orient. Perspectives Régionales et Internationales, Cahiers D'Histoire et de Politique Internationale, no. 5, Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, Geneva, 1985, pp. 44, 52.

The story of what Anthony Eden continued to euphemistically call Anglo-American cooperation over Iran between 1951-1953<sup>20</sup>, reveals that the Americans would not be pushed around by the British if their interests were involved<sup>21</sup>. The British Government, then still the Labour Government of Attlee and Bevin<sup>22</sup>, tried to rally American support behind the British case after the nationalization of A.I.O.C., insisting that the nationalist government of Mohammed Mussadiq was driving Iran right into arms of the Soviet Union<sup>23</sup>. They solicited American support for the overthrow of Mussadiq, wanting to replace him with a pro-British government, a sport the British had been practicing for decades in Iran. They failed to obtain American consent, because American policy makers concerned with Iran, such as Ambassador Henry Grady, were not bothered by British oil interests in Iran; as a matter of fact, they wanted to break the British monopoly over Iranian oil. Moreover, they had a considerably different appreciation of Mussadiq's Nationalist government. They felt that the genuine nationalism of the organizations around Mussadiq would form an effective counterweight to Communist influence which operated through the Tudeh party.

The British then turned to what effectively became an economic blockade of Iran, hoping to destabilize Mussadiq's position, and in September 1951 started moving British troops, war planes, and warships into the area in order to take the Abadan area, which was an island, by force. They were told by President Truman not to proceed, and a military operation was called off. What the British obtained was a certain amount of policy coordination with the United States in order to reach a settlement with Mussadiq's government<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Eden, Full Circle, p. 219.

<sup>21</sup> The following analysis is primarily based on Richard W. Cottam, Iran and the United States: A Cold War Case Study, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1988, pp. 95-113; Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony. Discord and Collaboration in the World Political Economy, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984, pp. 167-169; Leitner, *op. cit.*, passim. Divine, however, describes American policies as inspired by a Communist threat, rather than by oil interests, and pictures the decision to give American companies a share in the new oil arrangement in Iran as simply 'one possibly way out', Robert A. Divine, Eisenhower and the Cold War, Oxford University Press, New York, 1981, pp. 71-79.

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Bevin died in the course of the nationalization crisis; his place as Foreign Secretary was taken by Herbert Morrison.

<sup>23</sup> It is highly unlikely that the British gave as much importance to a possible Communist threat; after World War Two they had been prepared for a while to make a deal with the Soviet Union, dividing Iran into two spheres of influence, reserving the oil-rich South for themselves.

<sup>24</sup> The British certainly perceived this policy coordination as a major success in their relations with the United States. Churchill's Private Secretary noted in his diary : 'it is the first time since 1945 that the Americans have joined with us in taking overt joint action against a third power. Fear of ganging  
(continued...)

However, in 1952, after the resumed negotiations had failed, diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Iran were broken off, because Mussadiq's domestic position had seriously weakened: several parties accused him of being an American agent, and he therefore decided to withdraw from bargaining. At that moment, American and British interests temporarily coincided: the Americans no longer saw Mussadiq as an effective agent against Communism, and agreed to coordinate his downfall with the British. This change in American attitude can be explained by the arrival of the Eisenhower Administration as well, which was much more receptive to suggestions that the Soviet Union was trying to stage a change of regime in Iran.

The temporary character of Anglo-American understanding became evident as soon as the new regime under General Zahedi had been put into power, and negotiations about the nationalization of A.O.I.C. were resumed. The United States forced the United Kingdom to accept an agreement far worse than they could have obtained in 1950, had she been willing to a 50/50 distribution of net profits between her and the Iranian government. The new settlement of September 1954, achieved by constant American pressure on the British to give in a bit more at each round of the negotiations, provided for 40% of Iranian oil to be produced by American oil companies, leaving only 40% to British Petroleum, thus breaking the British monopoly on Iranian oil and opening up the market to American companies.

The events in Iran between 1951 and 1954 could have taught the British some important lessons. First, that American and British interests need not coincide in the Middle East; second, that the United States would be prepared to exert strong pressure on Great Britain not to act unilaterally, such as over Abadan; third, that the United States might have a view of Middle East nationalism that would not necessarily coincide with the British interpretation; fourth, that, by consequence, the card of a Communist threat, as revealed by nationalist movements, might not always be helpful in attracting American support for the defence of British interests. Nevertheless, British foreign policy makers would look the other way, and continue believing that the United States recognized their privileges in the Middle East<sup>25</sup>. As a matter of fact, the Iran experience would make them apprehensive of American diplomacy: we will see how they were eager not let it happen again that the Americans would

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<sup>24</sup>(...continued)

up has hitherto prevented them', John Colville, The Fringes of Power. Downing Street Diaries 1939-1955. Volume Two: 1941-April 1955, Spectre, 1987, entry 22 August-25 August 1952, p. 310.

<sup>25</sup> In this context, American Secretary of State Dean Acheson's words to Eden's Private Secretary, Evelyn Shuckburgh, after 'a disagreeable couple of meetings (-) about Persia' should have rung a bell: 'He said, "You must learn to live in the world as it is", which I thought a very offensive remark, as it no doubt was meant to be. This was a bad day', Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, p. 27, entry 4 November 1951.

cajole them into an unfavourable agreement with a third party in the Middle East. In this sense, Abadan, and Iran in general, would become an interesting point of reference to British policymakers.

### 7.3.2 The concluding of the 1954 Suez Canal Treaty

Indeed, when in early 1953 difficulties with Egypt about renegotiating the Treaty, which regulated the presence of British troops in the Suez Canal area, seemed almost insurmountable, British policymakers tried to put pressure on the United States to help them persuade Egypt to accept an agreement on British terms. They were fully aware, however, of the poor result such actions were producing in Iran at the same time. Actually, they were afraid that the Americans would put them under constant pressure to give in a bit more to the Egyptians until they would be left with nothing<sup>26</sup>. Eden and Churchill were anxious not to allow the Egyptian leader, General Naguib, to play the same game as Mussadiq had played in their perception, namely playing off the United States against Britain<sup>27</sup>. That is one reason why the British wanted the United States to join the negotiations themselves: it would make it look less as if the United States were playing a mediating role rather than the British big uncle who would punish the Egyptians, if they were not going to listen to the British<sup>28</sup>. It was crucial for them to persuade the Americans to make economic and military assistance to Egypt dependent on Egyptian acceptance of the new treaty as the British wanted it. In January 1953 the British had been successful in preventing the United States from delivering arms to Egypt<sup>29</sup>, but by March the Americans had grown impatient with the British attitude. The American Ambassador in London, Winthrop Aldrich, calling at Eden's office, even feared that the Egyptian problem might bring about a general crisis in Anglo-American affairs<sup>30</sup>, after Churchill, in a letter to Eisenhower, had threatened to go it alone and to simply stay in the Canal Zone: 'we are not afraid of Neguib'<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> This becomes clear from Eden's impressions after a discussion with Eisenhower and Dulles in Washington on 6 March 1953, FO 800/839, US/53/49.

<sup>27</sup> Eden explicitly warned Eisenhower against this in a letter on 1 April 1953; Geoffrey Aronson, From Sideshow to Center Stage. U.S. Policy towards Egypt 1946-1956, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO, 1986, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> FO 800/839, US/53/53, 18 March 1953.

<sup>29</sup> Aronson, From Sideshow to Center Stage, p. 61.

<sup>30</sup> FO 800/839, US/53/69, 21 March 1953.

<sup>31</sup> FO 800/839, US/53/67, Foreign Office to Washington, Telegram 1280, 19 March 1953.



By the Autumn of 1953 the Americans were prepared to give economic aid to Egypt. The British first asked Eisenhower to wait until they would have met personally at the upcoming trilateral Bermuda summit with the French in early December. When no agreement was reached on Bermuda, Churchill stepped up pressure and warned Eisenhower that if the United States were to give assistance to Egypt 'we cannot help you any longer over the Far East in the face of general feeling of indignation throughout the country', an argument that Churchill had used before to the same purpose that Summer<sup>32</sup>. This clearly illustrates how persistent British policymakers were in thinking that they 'rightfully ruled' the Middle East, and certainly Egypt, and that they merited American support. Moreover, they clearly tried to use the strategic and diplomatic leverage they could obtain from providing an essential link in the implementation of American strategy of containment. The British did not fail to stress that in this context the United States also had an interest in a postponement of a British withdrawal from the Canal Zone until Egyptian reassurances had been obtained that the Canal would remain a secure route for the Western world in case of major calamities<sup>33</sup>. And, as a matter of fact, not until after the conclusion of the negotiations between Egypt and Britain in July 1954, did the United States announce its willingness to provide 40 million dollars in military and economic assistance to Egypt<sup>34</sup>. Small wonder then that British policy makers perceived the conclusion of the Treaty as an important success by all measures. It had seemed as if, in the end, sticking it out had produced the American attitude that was deemed necessary to persuade the Egyptians to sign a treaty that was favourable to the United Kingdom.

### 7.3.3 An anti-communist Middle Eastern alliance

British foreign policy makers were unable to understand that since 1953 the United States had been developing an attitude towards the Middle East that was increasingly insensitive to British interests in and dominance over the area. The United States perceived the

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<sup>32</sup> FO 800/840, US/53/144, Eden to Dulles, 17 November 1953; FO 800/840, US/53/156, Churchill to Eisenhower, 19 December 1953; FO 800/840, US/53/158, Churchill to Eisenhower, 22 December 1953; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954. Volume IX The Near and Middle East Part 2, US Government Printing Office Washington, 1986 (editor in chief John P. Glennan), p. 2124, footnote 2, Caffery to Washington, Telegram 112, 21 July 1953: '[the] British point of view is that as Great Britain stands behind [the] United States in Korea, [the] United States stands behind Great Britain in Egypt'.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. FO 800/841, US/54/24, Eden to Churchill, 23 April 1954.

<sup>34</sup> Eventually, the money was not given, because Dulles had decided to use the money as a carrot to induce Egypt to an Egyptian-Israeli settlement. Barry Rubin, 'America and the Egyptian Revolution, 1950-1957', Political Science Quarterly, (96), 1, 1982, pp. 80-82.

concluding of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty on the Suez canal area as a major achievement of their cold war diplomacy. They considered it essential for Egypt to stay in the Western camp and thus thought it important that Anglo-Egyptian difficulties should be resolved before these would dissociate Egypt from the West<sup>35</sup>. The 1954 Treaty was thus interpreted differently in Washington and London: while the British policymakers thought they had been able to make use of United States' pressure on Egypt in concluding a treaty they found acceptable, the Americans perceived the negotiations to be the result of their pressure on both Great Britain and Egypt to reach a settlement.

Before 1953 the United States had tried to draw Egypt into a multilateral agreement that would arrange the security in the Middle East, the so-called Middle East Command, a secondary goal of which was to divert the attention of Arab countries away from the Israeli problem. This military structure was deliberately aimed at preserving British predominance in the area<sup>36</sup> (the Commander in Chief was going to be a British soldier<sup>37</sup>). In 1950 and 1951 the British position in the Middle East was of such importance to the United States that, when tension between Great Britain and Egypt over the British presence in that country increased, and the British raised the number of troops in the Canal Zone to 80,000 instead of the 10,400 permitted by the 1936 treaty, the United States decided to support the British because the Suez Canal Zone was considered to be of too high importance in case of a conflict with the Soviet Union<sup>38</sup>.

The events of Black Saturday (26 January 1952), when Egyptian crowds attacked and killed British citizens after British soldiers had killed 43 Egyptians, some of whom had allegedly attacked British water supplies in the Canal Zones, marked the beginning of a redefinition of American policy towards Egypt: the Truman Administration perceived a communist revolution not to be unlikely and grew dissatisfied with the British practice of playing off different Egyptian factions against each other. Independently from the United

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<sup>35</sup> Aronson, From Sideshow to Center-Stage, pp. 96-97.

<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the Americans also supported the French empire in Northern Africa because of the area's strategic importance, and were prepared to support the French against Moroccan and Tunisian claims for independence; see Eden's summaries of his discussions with Acheson; FO 800/750, Af/51/3, Telegram 651, 7 November 1951; FO 800/750, Af/52/10, 26 May 1952.

<sup>37</sup> British foreign policy makers thought this only right: 'In the Middle East the burden of leadership falls on us', Churchill minuted to Eden, thus giving expression to the conviction that the United States had allowed the United Kingdom to dominate over the Middle East, FO 800/807, ME/52/1, 6 January 1952.

<sup>38</sup> Aronson, From Sideshow to Center-Stage, pp. 25-36.

Kingdom, the United States contacted the Free Officers of Neguib and Nasser in order to look for an Egyptian regime that could guarantee stability and was safely linked with the West. British political practices in Egypt were increasingly detrimental to such an objective. Whereas the Americans hoped and expected that Neguib and his Free Officers could act like Atatürk in Turkey<sup>39</sup>, and worked to that effect by promising economic assistance to the new rulers, the British continued to believe that Neguib's government was like any other Egyptian government; Eden thought they played the 'usual tactic of every Egyptian Government to represent themselves as the last bulwark between us and mob disorders (Farouk himself used to try to exploit this line)'<sup>40</sup>.

Although the American Governments of Truman and Eisenhower were prepared to judge Egyptian nationalism on its own merits, they preferred to define it as a tool in constructing an anti-communist alliance in the Middle East<sup>41</sup>. The British continued to ignore Arab nationalism altogether, and thought they could continue to influence Arab politics as they had done before, by maintaining client regimes in Iraq and Jordan, and by playing off different factions against each other in Egypt and, apart from the 1951-1953 Mossadiq interlude, in Iran. British policymakers thus remained unable to see that the United States grew worried about one major cause of discontent in Egypt, that is, the British way of dealing with Egypt, and with the Middle East in general.

While in 1953 President Eisenhower was still prepared to support the British position in Suez, his Secretary of State was growing impatient with British stubbornness over the Canal Zone, and the consequences it would have on security in the Middle East. Dulles thought a security arrangement should be the goal of the United States that would comprise those states in the Near East that bordered the Soviet Union. However, while increasingly defining the American interests in the Middle East to be no longer coinciding with British influence in the area, the United States continued to involve the United Kingdom in its policies, thus giving

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<sup>39</sup> Aronson, *ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>40</sup> FO 800/769, Eg/52/68, Eden to Churchill, 7 November 1952.

<sup>41</sup> This is ignored by the so-called revisionists of the Eisenhower Presidency, who depict Eisenhower's Third World policies, and especially his handling of the Middle East, as among his major accomplishments. Cf, for instance, Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*, pp. 71-104. McMahon argues that this Cold War interpretation of Third World nationalism contributed to instability of the area rather than long term stability, Robert J. McMahon, 'Eisenhower and Third World Nationalism: A Critique of the Revisionists', *Political Science Quarterly*, (101), 3, 1986, pp. 453-473, esp. 463-466, which deal with Eisenhower's Middle East policies. The general thrust of Aronson's analysis of U.S. policies towards Egypt between 1946 and 1956 corresponds with that view, Aronson, *From Sideshow to Center-Stage*.

the impression to the British that they could hold on to their position. From Spring 1953 on, the United States, Great Britain and Turkey had been engaged in coordinated strategic planning for the Middle East area. Early in 1954 the United States considered Iran stable enough to start an arms assistance programme, while Pakistan and Iraq were actively seeking American military aid. These developments strongly distressed the British Foreign Office who feared that the United States would reinforce its position in the Middle East at the expense of Great Britain. British foreign policy makers wanted to make sure that, if the Americans really had to enter the area, the spread of American influence would be contained by formal Anglo-American cooperation.

The first results of Dulles's attempts to create a 'Northern Tier' was the Pact between Turkey and Pakistan of 19 February 1954 and the supply of U.S. arms to Iraq in April of that year. At the same time American pressure on Great Britain to reach an agreement with Egypt was increased. The British became worried<sup>42</sup>, but remained convinced that they could make the Americans support them over Egypt, even when in June 1954 Eisenhower bluntly told Churchill, when the latter, accompanied by Eden, travelled to Washington to discuss the Anglo-Egyptian quarrel, that the United States would break with London and pursue a policy independent of British concerns if no agreement was reached soon<sup>43</sup>. The British refused to face the possibility that the United States could decide on Middle Eastern matters without the United Kingdom. Despite warnings from the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Roger Makins, that the British attitude could eventually mean that they might find themselves 'having to deal with a powerful, nationalistic and frustrated America'<sup>44</sup>, Eden looked back on the outcome of the way the Canal Treaty was eventually concluded: 'The Americans agreed to the use of their economic influence to help as an incentive to induce the Egyptians to make and keep an agreement on acceptable terms. This was to be understood by all concerned, but not blatantly expressed'<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>42</sup> In April 1954, at the Geneva Conference on Indo-China, when Dulles was asking the reluctant British to participate in an air strike at Dien Bien Phu in order to save the surrounded French troops, Eden was very suspicious of American motives: 'A.E.'s conviction is that all the Americans want to do is to replace the French and run Indo-China themselves. "They want to replace us in Egypt too. They want to run the world"', Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, entry 2 May 1954, p. 187.

<sup>43</sup> Aronson, From Sideshow to Center-Stage, p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> Makins to Eden, FO 800/842, US/54/82, 21 June 1954.

<sup>45</sup> Eden, Full Circle, p. 260.

United States officials thought that they could persuade Egypt to conclude a defence treaty with Pakistan, and to agree to a Iraqi adherence to such a Pact, insensitive to Egyptian objections that this would actually strengthen the position of one of its major rivals for leadership in the Arab world. Neguib and Nasser had been disappointed by the American decision to grant arms to Iraq while military assistance to Egypt was still conditional on Egyptian agreement to participate in some form of security arrangement in the Middle East. On top of that, Iraq and Turkey announced the imminent signing of a defence treaty on 11 January 1955, agreed upon in February 1954 after an attempt by Egypt to rally Arab states behind a revival of the collective security arrangements of the Arab League had failed.

American security policy in the Middle East had assumed that all Arab and Islamic states could be unified against the threats of communism. Egypt's opposition against the cluster of treaties that reinforced Iraq's position in the area, caused the United States to stay out. Great Britain had joined the Turko-Iraqi treaty in April 1955, thus establishing the Baghdad Pact, in order to preserve its influence in Iraq: the 1930 treaty between the two countries, allowing for military bases, was due to expire, and joining the Turko-Iraqi treaty seemed an easy way to maintain the British position. It has been claimed that the United States saw this as a fait accompli staged by Eden<sup>46</sup>. No such evidence exists, however. It is much more likely that the United States preferred to remain unidentified with the Pact as long as Egypt, their model for Arab nationalism, remained opposed to it. It did not prevent the United States from cooperating with the pact, for instance, by appointing Loy Henderson as a formal U.S. observer. Even if the United States stayed out, Dulles's objective of creating an anti-communist alliance in the Northern Tier had been achieved, even more so after Iran and Pakistan joined the Pact in the late Summer of 1955.

The American attitude towards Middle East security did not change the British perception of the role they and the United States were supposed to play in the Middle East. Harold Macmillan, who had become Foreign Secretary in April 1955, when Anthony Eden took over from Winston Churchill as Prime Minister, claimed that in August Britain had obtained 'a clear promise that if the Arab-Israeli tension could be reduced, America would join the Baghdad Pact'<sup>47</sup>. One month earlier, during the Geneva summit of France, Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States, Eden had convinced Eisenhower that tanks should be

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<sup>46</sup> David Carlton, Anthony Eden. A Biography, Allen and Unwin, London, 1981, pp. 380-381.

<sup>47</sup> Harold Macmillan, Tides of Fortune 1945-1955, Macmillan, London, 1969, p. 633.

delivered to Iraq by both countries<sup>48</sup>, which was interpreted as further evidence of U.S. support for the way Great Britain was dealing with Iraq and the Baghdad Pact.

Clearly then, until the moment that relations between Egypt and the West started to deteriorate in September 1955, when it became known that Nasser had purchased arms from the Eastern bloc, the Baghdad Pact was perceived by the British as an American invention: 'we had been left with the Turko-Iraqi pact which the Americans started, and then ran out of'<sup>49</sup>. They were aware that the U.S. were not ready to formally associate themselves with the Treaty, but noticed that the Americans were prepared to deliver arms to the adhering Middle Eastern countries, and that they were willing to participate in the Pact's structural organizations: not only did they formally appoint an observer, but in addition they were secretly present at the meetings of the Pact's security and economic committee<sup>50</sup>.

By the Summer of 1955, therefore, British objectives seemed to be within reach: a new treaty with Iraq had preserved British bases; her alliance with the Baghdad Pact had affirmed its primary position in the Middle East; this Pact had been approved of, and even initiated, by the United States<sup>51</sup>; within reasonable time, the United States would join the Pact themselves; since the Summer of 1954 the United States and Great Britain had been involved in secret conversations that would have to produce a lasting settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict<sup>52</sup>. Why would British policymakers consider their position in the Middle East to be seriously challenged by the United States that Summer?

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<sup>48</sup> Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, entry 20 July 1955, p. 272; cf. Macmillan, Tides of Fortune, p. 632.

<sup>49</sup> Macmillan's diary, entry 14 July 1955, Tides of Fortune, p. 632.

<sup>50</sup> Mohammed H. Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail. Suez Through Egyptian Eyes, André Deutsch, London, 1986, p. 224.

<sup>51</sup> Reid suggests that the Baghdad Pact was primarily a British initiative, based on the short term interest of renewing the 1930 treaty with Iraq before a new government, less friendly to Great Britain, would come to power; Brian Holden Reid, 'The "Northern Tier" and "Baghdad Pact"', in John W. Young (ed.), The Foreign Policy of Churchill's Peacetime Administration 1951-1955, Leicester University press, Worcester, 1988, pp. 159-180. I think it is an exaggeration to state that the United States had strong reservations about the Baghdad Pact, despite their interest in a strong Northern Tier (Reid, p. 163). Such a view ignores the fact that from late 1954 until January 1955 the Americans, notably Dulles, have been very anxious to establish a web of defence treaties between Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq.

<sup>52</sup> The so-called 'Alpha' plan; cf. Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, pp. 242-267.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

It has been contended that the British Government under Sir Winston Churchill and Sir Anthony Eden still perceived their country to occupy a predominant position in the Middle East, and that this position was accepted by the United States, as it had been since the end of the Second World War. British foreign policy makers remained unaware of a change in the American attitude towards both American interests in the area and the role the United Kingdom should play in their defence. More specifically, they were confident that the Americans would follow the British lead in the area. The American position regarding a number of important issues, such as the concluding of an Anglo-Egyptian treaty regarding the Suez Canal Zone and the foundation of the Baghdad Pact, was perceived to be occasionally troublesome, but, in the end, in correspondence with British interests, not in the least because of perceived successful diplomatic pressure by the United Kingdom.

Moreover, during this period Great Britain engaged in several limited military actions in the Middle East without being stopped or forced to undo by the United States. In July 1955 Britain sent reinforcements to its Protectorate of Aden in order to restore order. In the second half of October 1955 troops were sent to the Buraimi Oasis and to some areas of Abu Dhabi, in order to prevent Saudi Arabia from occupying the area<sup>53</sup>; at the same time troops were sent to Oman to secure the area for the Sultan of Muscat and Oman, who was challenged by the Imam of Oman who, supported by Saudi Arabia, wanted to declare Oman independent. In the first half of 1956 Britain was to intervene militarily two more times in Bahrain in order to deter Saudi Arabia<sup>54</sup>. These events testify to the relative freedom of manoeuvre the British still enjoyed in defending their oil interests and client regimes in the area.

The general orientation to world affairs of the British foreign policy elite between 1951 and 1955 thus builds on perceptions and expectations that had already been shaped by the dynamics of the Anglo-American security regime between 1945 and 1951. If small group decision making tends to reinforce pre-existing beliefs of group members, it seems likely that those, who had been part of the foreign policy elite, such as Lord Salisbury, Selwyn Lloyd,

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<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, the Government decided not to inform the United States of their decision to withdraw from international arbitration and to send in the troops. The United States did not formally react until two weeks after the military operation; Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune*, pp. 641-642.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Mangold, 'Force and Middle East Oil. The Post-War Record', *The Round Table. The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, (66), 1976, pp. 96-97.

and Harold Macmillan<sup>55</sup>, would share, what Brecher would call, an attitudinal prism regarding Anglo-American relations. This view would comprise above all the conviction that Great Britain held primary responsibility over the Middle East, second, that the United States would eventually follow a British lead in the area, and, third, that American hesitations could be overcome by making use of the argument that Communist forces were increasingly influential in the area.

This is not to say that British policymakers still thought of the United Kingdom as a power on an equal footing with the United States. The development of the hydrogen bomb by the Americans in 1953 would provoke a fundamental reassessment of British position and role in the world, and was to have a profound influence on the British readiness to reach an agreement with Egypt on the Suez Canal problem in 1954. Eden, as a Foreign Secretary, thought that a military base like the one the British had in the Suez area could easily be destroyed with one hydrogen bomb, and thus had become superfluous. No compelling reason therefore existed to try to stay in Egypt. This vision, however, was shared neither by Churchill nor by a large portion of his Party. It forms part of Eden's cognitive beliefs system, and will therefore be dealt with in the next chapter, which will deal with his Operational Code. It is to his cognitive belief system that we turn next.

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<sup>55</sup> Salisbury had worked under Eden at the Foreign Office in the 1930s, was the Government's spokesman on Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords between 1951 and 1957 and had formally replaced Eden, when the latter was operated in 1953; Selwyn Lloyd had been Minister of State at the Foreign Office (1951-1955), Minister of Defence (1955), and Foreign Secretary (1955-1957); Macmillan was Foreign Secretary in 1955.



## Chapter 8: The operational code of Sir Anthony Eden

### 8.1 Introduction

The relative influence of individual cognitive belief systems of politicians is one of the main themes of this work. It has been argued that the operational code technique is an appropriate device for discovering the cognitive belief system of politicians who deal with foreign policy making. This chapter will describe Anthony Eden's operational code on the basis of his public speeches as well as of utterances pronounced in environments of a more private nature. The operational code differs from inductive methods to identify an individual's cognitive belief system, such as Cognitive Mapping, because it makes use of a previously designed classification of cognitive beliefs that are relevant to foreign policy making. Categories are divided into philosophical beliefs, which deal with a policymaker's assumptions and premises, and instrumental beliefs, which refer to matters of strategy and tactics. Table 8.1 gives an overview of this classification<sup>1</sup>.

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**Table 8.1: Operational Code Categories**

#### **1. Philosophical beliefs**

1. The fundamental nature of politics and political conflict, and the image of the opponent.
  - 1.1 What is the 'essential' nature of the political universe?
  - 1.2 What is the fundamental character of one's political opponents and of other significant political actors?
  - 1.3 What is the nature of the contemporary international system? Is conflict a permanent or a temporary feature? Is conflict caused by characteristics of man nation-states or the international political system?
2. What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one's fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score?
3. Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent? What is the role of chance in human affairs and history?

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<sup>1</sup> Sjöblom notes that neither George, nor Holsti, justified the choice of categories of beliefs; he argues that an actor's goals are not included and that philosophical beliefs 1-3 are heavily interrelated; Sjöblom nevertheless thinks the classification can be defended; Gunnar Sjöblom, 'Some Problems of the Operational Code Approach', in C. Jönsson, Cognitive Dynamics and International Politics, Frances Pinter, London, 1982, pp. 37-74.

4. How much 'control' or 'mastery' can one have over historical development? What is one's role in 'moving' and 'shaping' history in the desired direction?
5. What is the role of 'chance' in human affairs and in historical development?

## 2. Instrumental beliefs

1. What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives of political action?
2. How are the goals of political action pursued most effectively?
3. How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?
4. What is the best 'timing' of action to advance one's interests?
5. What is the utility of different means for advancing one's interests? What resources can one draw upon in the effort to advance one's interests?

Source: Holsti, 'A Typology of "Operational Code" Belief Systems', pp. xii-xiv.

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A previously designed scheme of classification can be very useful as a tool of comparative research in foreign policy making. Thus far, comparative analysis of types of operational code has been limited to their link with differences in personality<sup>2</sup> and to their variations in openness<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, very few operational code studies have actually been used for the analysis of foreign policy decision making<sup>4</sup>. In this context, an additional aim of this study is to attempt to assess to what extent Anthony Eden's operational code adds to our understanding of British decision making during the Suez crisis. However, before Eden's cognitive belief system can be reconstructed, it is necessary to solve several methodological problems.

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<sup>2</sup> One such example is Holsti's comparative analysis of existing operational code studies. Holsti argues that two beliefs dominate as master beliefs (the nature of the contemporary international system; the view of one's opponent). Belief systems are usually structured around one of these beliefs. Holsti makes an attempt to link each operational code 'type' to differences in character; Holsti, 'A Typology of "Operational Code" Belief Systems'.

<sup>3</sup> Stuart and Starr, 'The "Inherent Bad Faith Model" Revisited'.

<sup>4</sup> Examples are Stephen G. Walker, 'The Interface Between Beliefs and Behavior. Henry Kissinger's Operational Code and the Vietnam War', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (21), 1, 1977, pp. 129-168; Harvey Starr, *Henry Kissinger*.

## 8.2 Methodological considerations

Three methodological considerations are important in constructing a politician's operational code. First, the problem of sources that include a politician's assessment of the very decision making situation that one seeks to analyze. Second, the possibility that an individual's belief system reflects the role is playing in the policy process<sup>5</sup>. Third, the danger that an operational code is constructed on the basis of the politician's public utterances, which may be tailored to his audience rather than reflect his true opinions<sup>6</sup>.

(1) Avoidance of rationalizations afterwards. It is important that, in order to avoid using sources that might be influenced by Eden's experiences at Suez, the formulation of his operational code is based on those utterances that refer to the pre-crisis period. This implies that Eden's voluminous memoirs cannot be employed here. It is essential to try and reconstruct Eden's way of thinking at the beginning of the crisis. I have chosen to try to cover the period between 1924 and 1955, that is, from the moment that Eden became a Member of Parliament for Warwick and Leamington until he took over from Winston Churchill as Prime Minister on 6 April 1955. This still allows us to deal with Eden's first attitudes towards Nasser as an opponent, as Nasser was part of group of young officers that put aside King Farouk in 1952, and effectively became Egypt's leader in 1954.

(2) Accounting for role variables. In a very orthodox way of reasoning one could object to the operational code approach that it assumes the individual's cognitive belief system to remain relatively stable and coherent throughout time. It would thus not be possible to take into account the possibility that a politician can learn from certain experiences, or, much more damaging from a methodological point of view, that his thoughts are not as much a reflection of his individual belief system but rather a reflection of the role he is playing in the political system at a particular moment of his career. It has been suggested that politicians who are involved in foreign policy making will reflect opinions that are consistent with role expectations that surround the particular job they are occupying in the political system. A Minister of Defence is expected to display different attitudes towards a foreign policy problem from a Foreign Secretary or Prime Minister<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Sjöblom, 'Some Problems of the Operational Code', p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Stuart and Starr, 'The "Inherent Bad Faith Model" Revisited', pp. 23-28; Holsti, '"Operational Code" Belief Systems: A Code-Book'.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Jonathan M. Roberts, Decision-Making during International Crises, Macmillan, Houndmills, 1988, pp. 164-168; James N. Rosenau, 'The Relative Potency of Individual and Role Variables', in Rosenau, The Scientific Study of Foreign Policy, The Free Press, New York, 1971, pp. (continued...)

The possible influence of role variables can be accounted for by making a distinction between relevant political roles performed by Eden between 1924 and 1955 while analyzing the documents relevant to constructing Eden's operational code. I thus distinguish five relevant periods. (1) 1924-December 1935. In this period Eden became a Member of Parliament for the first time, Permanent Parliamentary Secretary at the Home Office, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, and Minister for League of Nations Affairs. (2) December 1935-March 1938. Eden served as Foreign Secretary under Neville Chamberlain. (3) March 1938-May 1945. In this period Eden willy-nilly became an important member of the internal opposition against Chamberlain's appeasement policy within the Conservative Party. Then he became Dominions Secretary<sup>8</sup> (1939/1940), Secretary of State for War (1940) and, finally, Foreign Secretary (1941-1945). (4) May 1945-November 1951. Member of the opposition against the Attlee Government. (5) November 1951-April 1955. Foreign Secretary under Churchill. Obviously, one would expect Eden to have different opinions on collective security as Minister for League of Nations Affairs than as Foreign Secretary. As a Foreign Secretary who had to compete with Churchill for dominance of foreign policy making, especially from 1951 until 1955, one can expect different opinions than a stable operational code would predict. By making a distinction between these five periods I hope to be able to control for role variables.

(3) The problem of honest intentions. Finally, a solution has to be found for the problem that an individual's utterances may not reflect his true intentions. It may rather be the case that they are pronounced because of their convenience at the time. Maybe a politician will try to please his audience, or will prefer not to show his real thoughts for political reasons. I hope to resolve that problem to a certain extent by making a distinction between Eden's public and private statements. It seems reasonable to presume that public statements will be more tailored to their audiences than private ones. I assume that beliefs which can be derived from the latter type of sources reflect Eden's cognitive beliefs better, and that the more they differ from public statements on the same subjects, the more these public statements were pronounced for political reasons. The practical problem caused by this comparison of public and private utterances is the lack of private sources for those periods that Eden has not been

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<sup>7</sup>(...continued)

177-212; Glen H. Stassen, 'Individual Preferences versus Role Constraint in Policy-Making. Senatorial Responses to Secretaries Acheson and Dulles', World Politics, (25), 1, 1972, pp. 96-119.

<sup>8</sup> Without a seat in the Cabinet.

in office, as most private data can be found in the series British Documents on Foreign Policy.

### 8.3 A description of Anthony Eden's operational code

What follows will be a rough description of Eden's cognitive beliefs, making use of the classification that has been developed by Holsti and George. However, I have decided not to present Eden's operational code by a tedious description of each category separately. Rather, I will concentrate on its master belief and on the way in which it is related to and conditions other categories.

In general, I will show that the central belief of Eden's operational code consists of the idea that any international dispute can be settled if the parties involved recognize and respect their respective security interests. Several beliefs follow from this: those about international relations, the place of the United Kingdom in world politics, the nature of one's opponents, and the way how to deal with them. I will claim that this cognitive belief system can explain to a certain extent Eden's attitudes towards Germany and Italy in the 1930s and the Soviet Union in the 1940s, and as such may provide relevant clues to understanding his policies towards Egypt and the United States in the 1950s. In certain periods, however, significant differences in Eden's attitudes can be observed related to the various roles he is performing in the British political system. Moreover, certain differences as to the use of military force are apparent in a comparison between public and private utterances<sup>9</sup>.

#### 8.3.1 The structure of Eden's belief system

There can be no doubt that, for most of the period covered by the operational code [1924-1955], Robert Anthony Eden's cognitive belief system was guided by the idea that conflict is a frequent feature of world politics, but that in the end any conflict can be accommodated as long as the parties involved are willing to recognize and respect their mutual security interests. A necessary precondition for conflict resolution, however, is the obedience to certain standards of international conduct which in turn form the basis of diplomatic

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<sup>9</sup> One important question would be whether a duplication of study would result in the same construction of Eden's operational code, cf. David G. Winter and Abigail J. Stewart, 'Content Analysis as a Technique for Assessing Political Leaders', in Margaret Hermann (ed.), A Psychological Examination of Political Leaders, The Free Press, New York, 1977, p. 33. I think the classification of the operational code, as codified by Ole Holsti, makes it fit the criterion of intersubjectivity. Some have argued that quantitative techniques, such as Evaluation Assertion Analysis, could be used as a check on a qualitative research technique, such as the operational code; e.g., Winter and Stewart, *ibid.*, pp. 41-42; Stuart and Starr, 'The "Inherent Bad Faith Model" Revisited', pp. 3-4; Starr, Henry Kissinger, pp. 82-93.

negotiation. This view of international relations ran parallel to Eden's general, although seldom referred to, conception of politics, [philosophical belief 1.1]<sup>10</sup>. Eden thinks of politics as 'essentially concerned with conflicting human claims: freedom and order, the individual and the state, tradition and change, personal security and adventure, ideals and reality, independence and interdependence. The art of statesmanship is to reconcile these claims and to build a way of life that gives them fair expression'<sup>11</sup>.

Within that context the relation of the individual to the state is the most urgent problem of politics, and, according to Eden, it exactly in the area that socialism is unable to provide a just balance between freedom and order<sup>12</sup>.

The adherence to standards of international conduct, most notably the observance of treaties and the willingness to resort to free negotiations<sup>13</sup>, furthers the growth of international confidence, which is a prerequisite for peace. This concept of the nature of world politics has important consequences for Eden's (1) view of the opponent (2) instrumental beliefs, both grounded in (3) some extent of historical optimism.

1. View of the opponent. Because of the predominance of the importance of standards of international conduct to Eden, his view of his opponents are derived from this principle rather than that the view of the opponent serves as a master belief itself around which other beliefs are centered. As long as states and their leaders adhere to certain convention of correct behaviour, it will remain possible to come to an agreement with any country. That is, it is possible to accommodate international conflict irrespective of the type of political system or political ideology of the various international actors: 'International relations are guided not by forms of government, but by the manner in which governments observe their undertakings'<sup>14</sup>. This implies that, according to Eden, one can come to terms with both dictatorships, such as Italy and Germany, and ideologically different nations, such as the Soviet Union. Indeed, class could not be a cause of international conflict as 'the interests of classes are not exclusive, but

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<sup>10</sup> The sources reveal little of Eden's general ideas of what politics is about. Only in the late 1940s does Eden show some thoughts on this theme.

<sup>11</sup> Foreword to Anthony Eden, Days for Decision, Faber and Faber, London, 1949, p. vii.

<sup>12</sup> Speech at a constituency meeting 1946, Eden, Days for Decision, p. 7; foreword to Freedom and Order. Selected Speeches 1939-1946, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1948, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> E.g. Eden, Foreign Affairs, p. 175, speech at Bradford, 14 December 1936.

<sup>14</sup> Eden, Foreign Affairs, speech at Bradford, 14 December 1936, p. 175.

complementary'<sup>15</sup>. By consequence, Eden would change his cooperative attitude towards other nations, once these would have passed a certain threshold of international misbehaviour: Italy passed that threshold with its invasion of Abyssinia in 1935, Germany when it started pressing for a corridor to Danzig in 1939, and the Soviet Union after it mounted a blockade of the Western zones of Berlin in 1948.

To Eden, this respect for a certain type of conduct was almost identical to interpersonal contact: 'we want, in our relations with all other countries, to try to maintain a standard of honesty, of fair dealing, and of international good faith. Foreign affairs are really not so very different in those respects from domestic affairs. Human intercourse is based on good faith, on the keeping of promises, on honouring the pledged word between man and man'<sup>16</sup>.

2. Instrumental beliefs. This view of the nature of the world politics and its consequences for the assessments of one's opponents similarly affects the way in which international diplomacy is practiced. Eden preferred personal contacts with the relevant actors: '(-) I cannot help feeling that a direct approach to the men concerned is more likely to produce results than other methods'<sup>17</sup>. His approach as a diplomat can therefore best be described as pragmatic: 'he was interested in settling problems, in bringing people together, and working out agreements (-). His first reaction, when he heard the speeches which the Americans and Russians were making to one another in the United Nations in 1951, was that he must somehow reduce the shouting and persuade people to talk to and not at one another (-). His great specialty was to remember always the third parties and fourth parties in the international confrontations with which he was involved (-). His aim, he used to say, was "to grasp definite and limited problems" and try to settle them bit by bit, one by one'<sup>18</sup>. Eden believed, indeed, that problems should be regarded as they arose, without politicians being guided by political doctrines and prejudices: 'all prejudices are equally fatal to good government'<sup>19</sup>.

This pragmatism of Eden's is borne out in the way he dealt with international disputes as Foreign Secretary or Minister for League of Nations Affairs in the 1930s and the 1950s.

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<sup>15</sup> Eden, Foreign Affairs, speech at a dinner party of the Foreign Press Association, 12 January 1937, p. 183.

<sup>16</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, speech at the House of Commons, 25 May 1944, p. 258.

<sup>17</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, speech at House of Commons, 31 July 1939, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, p. 15, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Eden, Days for Decision, speech at the annual general meeting of his constituency Conservative Association, mid 1946, pp. 5-6.

Eden tried to confine the hostility between the disputants to a very specific issue thus ignoring all other differences between the countries. This allowed him to solve the 1934 Balkan crisis, when Yugoslavia's King Alexander was murdered by a Hungarian terrorist; to find a solution for the Saar-problem, by pressing for an international police force under supervision of the League of Nations in order to hold a fair plebiscite on the future of the area in 1935<sup>20</sup>; in similar fashion Eden helped solving the dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia over Trieste in 1954, succeeded in securing German rearmament after the French Parliament botched the European Defence Community in 1954 by incorporating Western Germany into the 1948 Treaty of Brussels, the common defense pact that constituted the Western European Union, and managed to formulate a compromise over Indo-China at the 1954 Geneva conference that should satisfy all parties involved<sup>21</sup>.

3. Modest historical optimism. Both Eden's conception of the nature of world politics and his subsequent views of opponents and the possibilities of diplomacy are matched by a sense of optimism as to the possibility of influencing the course of history: for Eden it was possible to understand the course of history: 'history is not a series of isolated and disjointed incidents, but a continuous process'<sup>22</sup>; the politician should not ignore historical development, nor try to master it completely: '[c]hange is perhaps the only thing in the universe which is constant. By trying to thwart it, you only drive it underground. It becomes fitful and eruptive instead of ordered and continuous'; for Eden, politicians should attempt merely to guide development<sup>23</sup>.

This conception of history, change, and the role of chance in human affairs and history (philosophical beliefs 2, 3, 4) thus fits Eden's view that interactions between international actors can, to a reasonably large extent, be manipulated and guided towards accommodation of their disputes. Indeed, if countries adopted certain standards of international conduct, it would be possible to abandon the 'doctrine of force' which had ruled the interactions between

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. Peters, Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office.

<sup>21</sup> See, Robert Rhodes James, Anthony Eden; David Carlton, Anthony Eden. A Biography.

<sup>22</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, speech at the Scottish Unionist Conference at Glasgow, 30 October 1942, p. 169.

<sup>23</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, Address to the Constitutional Club at London, 17 April 1940, pp. 69-70. In this context of guided development should one understand Eden's claim that 'circumstances are, to a great extent, what we make them', Foreign Affairs, speech at Haseley Manor, 11 June 1938, p. 281.



states for so long. Then 'all outstanding questions would become possible to solve and international economic progress would bring happiness to every human being'<sup>24</sup>.

Eden's optimism is confined by the limits that history has set on the role a country is bound to play in world affairs: '() nations, like human beings, are fashioned and moulded by their past. You cannot wholly escape from your past. You can improve on it'<sup>25</sup>. For the United Kingdom this meant that its 'foreign policy is to a large extent dictated by our geographical position. Whether we like it or not, we are part of Europe. Whether we like it or not, we are also the centre of a great Imperial Commonwealth, and so we are, in that sense, a World Power too. Our duty is to act as a bridge, and there is nobody who can play that part but us-nobody else'<sup>26</sup>. In general terms, this role imposed by history points to another important component of Eden's belief system, already apparent is his master belief: nations can accommodate their disputes as long as they respect certain rules, and as long as they recognize their mutual legitimate interests.

3. The role of the United Kingdom in world affairs. Eden's view of the role of Great Britain in world affairs has been reasonably consistent throughout the period covered by the operational code. It contains two important elements: (a) its geographical position which makes the Middle East and Mediterranean strategically important to preserving the British Commonwealth and Empire (b) the recognition that the United Kingdom is not able to play the role of policeman of the world, and thus has been dependent on the United States ever since the early 1930s.

(a) Geopolitics. Its geography has made the United Kingdom part of Europe as well as leader of the Commonwealth. As most members of that Commonwealth are to be found on the shores of Indian and Pacific Ocean, the Middle East and the Mediterranean from the crucial link between the Commonwealth and its centre. This why Eden has defined freedom of communication over the Mediterranean and Red Seas a vital interest of the United Kingdom since he had become Foreign Secretary in 1935. During the Second World War Eden emphasized that Great Britain's vital interests lay more in the Mediterranean than elsewhere.

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<sup>24</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, Broadcast to the United States, 30 August 1939, p. 37. For Eden, peace was not equal to the absence of war: 'we do not believe in conflict. We believe in co-operation. The world has surely learnt enough, in its long history, to know that by patient collaboration man can steadily increase his standard of living (-). It can never be done by war', Foreign Affairs, speech at the Foreign Press Association Dinner, 12 January 1937, p. 186.

<sup>25</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, speech at the Scottish Unionist Conference at Glasgow, 30 October 1942, pp. 169-170.

<sup>26</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, speech at the House of Commons, 2 December 1942, p. 178.

After that war he still deemed the area essential, most notably because the Suez Canal was of vital interest to Great Britain for the transportation of its imports and exports.

Until the explosion of Atomic bomb, Eden was convinced that the Middle East, and in particular the Suez Canal area, was the most important strategic area, indispensable to win any large-scale war because of the control over the lines of communications. Eden had a clash with Churchill over the number of troops that could be afforded to be sent to the area (Churchill thought it less vital than Eden), because he was convinced that the Germans (until 1941 together with the Soviets, thereafter alone) would try to come down to the Canal and the Middle Eastern oil wells through the Kaukasus. After the war, however, Eden was one of the first to realize, as early as 1945, that nuclear weapons upset traditional military strategy, because no natural barrier would be able to stop their delivery, and that therefore the Suez Canal would rapidly lose its extreme strategic importance. Eden had thus an early grasp of changing British interests in the area, which would eventually lead to his difficult, but successful, attempt to convince the Churchill Government of the need to withdraw British troops from the Suez Canal zone in the early 1950s.

Despite its changed strategic importance, the Canal and, indeed, the whole of the Middle East remained an essential line of communication between the United Kingdom and its Commonwealth. Eden judged British economic weakness after the Second World War to be of a temporary nature and was convinced that preferential trading with the Commonwealth countries, even after Indian independence, would make it possible to rebuild the British economy. Both the transport of these trading goods and of oil imports, however, required some guarantee that the Suez Canal remain open to free navigation. Ever since the mid-1930s Eden called the Canal and the Mediterranean Britain's arterial road.

(b) Relative power. According to Eden, British influence is first of all based on prestige. In its turn, prestige is based not simply on military and economic strength but as well on the respect the United Kingdom merits as one of the world's oldest democracies, as on its adherence to international law. However, it is clear that for Eden the Commonwealth and Empire form the main source of prestige in Britain's relations with major powers: speaking about Anglo-American and Anglo-Soviet relations, Eden told the House of Commons in May 1944:

'we cannot say to the world: "you have got to do this; you have got to do that". That is beyond the power of 45,000,000. But what we can do, in our own conduct, and by our own leadership, to try to establish and maintain those standards of international conduct without which there cannot be peace. That I conceive to be the duty of British foreign policy (-). Though I have been in many negotiations with these two Powers alone, I have never felt any sense

of inferiority, and I honestly do not believe that they felt any particular sense of superiority (-). The reason, of course, that, although we are only 45 millions, we have in this island a unique geographical position and a rather remarkable experience, and because we are the centre of a great Empire'<sup>27</sup>.

Both in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s Eden is aware of Britain's relative weakness: already in the 1930s it is recognized that it is unthinkable that Britain will be able to impose it will on other nations in the world whenever it feels like it: already in 1932 Eden eventually opposes strong measures against Japanese aggression in the Far East, because the British Pacific fleet would be too weak for a display of coercive diplomacy. Any effective countering of Japan's aspirations required intimate cooperation between the United States and the United Kingdom. In the late thirties Eden tried to persuade his colleagues that cooperation with the United States was indispensable to dealing with the European crisis that was unfolding.

It is exactly the recognition of relative British weakness, despite it still being a great power, that determined Eden's policy dilemma as a Foreign Secretary between 1935 and 1938: given the consideration, shown in warnings from the Chiefs of Staff, that Great Britain would not have the resources to simultaneously fight three enemies, Japan, Germany and Italy, it was essential that the formation of blocs of countries be avoided, in order to prevent those countries from creating an alliance of their own. At the same time, the expansionist aspirations of each had to be dealt with. This resulted in a precarious policy of approaching Germany in a constructive mood which lasted well into 1939, while trying to oppose Italian aggression in Africa and the Mediterranean, but up to the point that she would be driven into Germany's arms. I claim that Eden's different approaches to Hitler and Mussolini can be explained by his master belief.

A permanent feature of Eden's belief system is therefore his recognition of relative British weakness, and the importance that Britain seek cooperation with the United States. This concept is reinforced when it becomes apparent to him during the Second World War that the war would result in increased British weakness. Already in 1942 Eden thinks that the Americans should 'fulfill a leading role after the war and thus [] accept worldwide responsibility for maintaining peace'<sup>28</sup>. The prevention of aggression should then be trusted into the hands of those countries that have a monopoly of strength in the world: the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom.

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<sup>27</sup> Eden, *Freedom and Order*, pp. 258-259; speech at the House of Commons, 25 May 1944.

<sup>28</sup> Eden, *Freedom and Order*, p. 179; speech to the House of Commons, 2 December 1942, referring to a speech by Sumner Welles on postwar arrangements.

In sum, Eden's view of how international relations should be conducted is constrained by his belief that other nations should respect Britain's vital interests. Because of the economic importance of the Empire, the Middle East, the Suez Canal, and the Mediterranean are a vital interest to the United Kingdom. At the same time, however, Britain is not strong enough to impose her will on other nations, and should therefore seek cooperation with notably the United States.

### 8.3.2 Impact of the structure of Eden's belief system on his view of his opponents

One of the advantages of the operational code's American intellectual origins is that in most operational code studies it has been clear where to look for an opponent in order to complete an individual's cognitive belief system. Usually, the Soviet Union appears as main adversary<sup>29</sup>. It is much more difficult to determine who should appear to be Eden's most important opponent. I have opted to include in my analysis Eden's views of (1) Italy, Germany, and, to a lesser extent, Japan, because they clearly were Britain's major challenge when he was in office in the 1930s, (2) the Soviet Union, because it was to become the West's major adversary after the Second World War, (3) the Middle East, especially the nationalist regimes in Egypt and Persia, because Nasser was to become Eden's 'obsession', as some authors claim, and, finally, (4) the United States, first, because what actually was taking place was the decline of British power relative to American power, and second, because of the rather peculiar pattern of Anglo-American relations during the Suez crisis.

I will show that (a) Eden's attitude towards Italy and Germany, and towards the Soviet Union until June 1948 fit his master belief well, (b) his attitude towards the Middle East gives rise to some puzzling questions as to his handling of the Suez crisis, (c) his view of the United States is blurred by the conviction that it would be possible to convince the Americans of the special nature of the British Commonwealth and Empire. Not until section 8.4 will I outline some expectations regarding Eden's handling of the Suez crisis, especially regarding his dealing with Egypt and the United States, on the basis of the knowledge of Eden's cognitive belief system.

1. Italy, Germany, and Japan. The most puzzling question of Anthony Eden's attitude towards Italy and Germany, is why he remained so positive about the possibility of a

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<sup>29</sup> This, of course, increases the possibility of comparing the operational codes of several leading American politicians. Cf. Stuart and Starr's analysis of Kissinger's, Dulles's and Kennedy's attitude towards the Soviet Union, Douglas T. Stuart and Harvey Starr, 'The "Inherent Bad Faith Model" Reconsidered'.

settlement with Hitler, while he was in favour of curbing Italian aggression almost from the beginning. One clue to an answer can be found in Eden's cognitive belief system, and cannot be found elsewhere. Towards the end of the war, in a speech to the House of Commons, in which Eden laid down the principles of his foreign policy, he made a remark that can easily be understood, now we know his belief system: 'Why did the war become inevitable? It was because Hitler and Mussolini refused to observe the ordinary standards of international conduct in the day-to-day conduct of international affairs'<sup>30</sup>. We know what these standards were: 'maintain a standard of honesty of fair dealing, and of international good faith (-), the keeping of promises, on honouring the pledged word between man and man'<sup>31</sup>. It should be noted that not even in 1944 did Eden speak of the evil of totalitarian dictators threatening democracies, or of inherently expansionist tendencies of Italy and Germany. He sticks to his belief that in principle the nature of the political system of other nations does not matter, as long as certain international rules are observed. Indeed, as Foreign Secretary, Eden was not extraordinarily alarmed by German's remilitarization of the Rhineland in March 1936. Even though he thought it a violation of the sanctity of treaties (i.e., Versailles), Eden thought that international confidence could be restored by negotiation. Similarly, Eden was not alarmed by German claims regarding the Sudeten-area in the Autumn of 1937. Discussing the matter with his French colleague on 29 and 30 November, Eden said that '[t]here was a feeling here [UK] that the Sudeten Germans had certain grievances, which ought to be dealt with' and that 'the Czechs had certainly not yet done enough'<sup>32</sup>. Eden still believed that it would be possible to reach a settlement with Germany. As late as 10 February 1938, that is, shortly before his resignation, Eden wrote a memorandum in which he thought Germany could be induced to a 'contribution to general appeasement': at the very least he expected 'that Germany would refrain from intervention against us should we be attacked in the Mediterranean or in the Far East'. He thought it reasonable to offer Germany colonial compensation for such a pledge<sup>33</sup>. Eden's attitude towards Germany did not even change after his resignation, as role theory

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<sup>30</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, p. 258, speech to the House of Commons, 25 May 1944.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, Volume 19, Record of a Conversation, 29 and 30 November 1937, C 8234/270/18, p. 600. Prime Minister Sir Neville Chamberlain made it clear during the same conversations that in the eyes of British public opinion 'we ought not to be entangled in a war on account of Czechoslovakia', *ibid.*, p. 599, a remark that was not in any way modified by Eden.

<sup>33</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, Volume 19, Memo by Eden on German contribution to general appeasement, C 1057/42/16, 10 February 1938, p. 873.

would predict, being freed of the duty of daily compromising at the Foreign Office; indeed, Eden was reluctant to condemn the 1938 Four Power-settlement of Munich, which he greeted in the House of Commons as the beginning of 'new hopes' and 'better things', or at least as 'breathing space'<sup>34</sup>. Not until the Summer of 1939, when Germany claimed Danzig, did Eden show a completely different stand: 'nobody can foretell with precision what the tactics will be in the next few weeks. No doubt there will be many moves. We will be lulled and soothed, we shall be threatened and provoked, but in essence the Nazis' purpose remains the same-to impose on Poland this year the fate which they imposed upon Czechoslovakia'<sup>35</sup>. The latter speech indicates, first of all, a change of terminology: Nazis instead of Germany; secondly, it clearly points to the recognition that Germany no longer respected the standards of international conduct.

Eden's opinion of Italy had reached that verdict much sooner. Eden, as a Minister for League of Nations Affairs, had recognized Italy's ambitions in Africa early in 1935. At the time he acknowledged the use of Italy as a counterweight to German moves towards Austria and proposed League arbitration. But when Italy actually invaded Abyssinia in October 1935 Eden deemed that the League should resort to collective security and impose effective sanctions; yet, he was the only member of the Cabinet in favour of an arms boycott<sup>36</sup>. As Foreign Secretary, from December 1935 onwards, Eden had to fight a constant battle within the Foreign Office and later against Sir Neville Chamberlain, who became Prime Minister in 1937, about policies towards Italy. While most people at Whitehall thought Germany and Japan to be the main adversaries, which implied that Italy somehow had to be appeased, for instance, by *de jure* recognition of her occupation of Abyssinia (Chamberlain's theme from 1937 on), Eden thought Italy to be the real troublemaker, whose behaviour could trigger a large-scale war by inviting Germany to fish in troubled waters.

It is easy to see, knowing Eden's belief system, why he considered Italy much more dangerous than Germany: first, it was threatening the balance of power in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, thus threatening the arterial road between Empire and homeland. Second, Italy was not a trustworthy party in the game of international relations. In a minute, written in November 1936, Eden wondered:

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<sup>34</sup> Eden, *Foreign Affairs*, p. 287-288, speech at the House of Commons, 3 October 1938.

<sup>35</sup> Eden, *Freedom and Order*, pp. 32-33, speech to the House of Commons, 27 July 1939.

<sup>36</sup> James, *Anthony Eden*, pp. 151-152

'Does any in the Foreign Office really believe that Italy's foreign policy will at any time be other than opportunist? Any agreement with Italy will be kept as long as it suits Italy. Surely nobody can now place any faith in her promises. All this is not an argument against seeking to improve Anglo-Italian relations, but against placing an exaggerated valuation on any such improvement if and when we get it [] We must be on guard against increasing the dictator's prestige by our own excessive submissiveness'<sup>37</sup>.

Eden therefore does not want to know about de jure recognition: 'to grant him [Mussolini] de jure recognition as the result of a bargain seems to me rather sordid and might be dangerous to our reputation [] To give him recognition without a bargain [] would I suppose be hailed as a considerable triumph for Mussolini []'<sup>38</sup>. Over and over, Eden tried to convince Chamberlain to stop appeasing Mussolini. His different assessment of Germany and Italy is borne out by his letter to Chamberlain of 9 January 1938:

'[] there seems to be a certain difference between Italian and German positions in that an agreement with the latter might have a chance of reasonable life, especially if Hitler's own position were engaged, while Mussolini is, I fear, the complete gangster and his pledged word means nothing.[] But all this would not alone deter me. What worries me much more is the effect that recognition might have on our own moral position' (emphasis mine)<sup>39</sup>.

It should therefore be concluded that the difference in attitude of Eden towards Italy on the one hand, and Germany on the other hand, is related to (1) his perception of international affairs as a world in which the accommodation of conflicts between states is possible, as long as certain standards are observed and mutual interests recognized, and (2) the central position the Mediterranean and the Middle East in his view of the relation between the United Kingdom and her Commonwealth and Empire. A rival explanation would be that Eden had capitalized on his insistence on collective security through the League of Nations, when still a Minister for League of Nations Affairs, indeed had become Foreign Secretary on that quality, and thus would be interested in insisting on a hawkish position towards Italy in order not to lose popular support. Although this would provide an explanation of his general attitude

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<sup>37</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, Volume 17, Minute by Sir Anthony Eden, No. 352, R 6646/226/22, 5 November 1936, pp. 513-514.

<sup>38</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, volume 19, Eden to Chamberlain, R 248/7/22, 1 January 1938, p. 711.

<sup>39</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, volume 19, Eden to Chamberlain, R 306/7/22, 9 January 1938, p. 723.

towards Italy, it can not satisfactorily explain why Eden turned away from collective security as the correct approach to Italian aggression, nor can it explain the different attitude towards Germany. These can only be understood by Eden's master belief about international affairs.

2. The Soviet Union. Anthony Eden's views of the Soviet Union until 1948 reflect his opinion that international relations should not be influenced by the nature of the political system of a particular country as long as that country respects certain standards of international conduct. Well into the Cold War Eden professes the idea that mutual respect for one's legitimate interests would make it possible to remain on speaking terms with the Soviet Union. The blockade of Western Berlin would signify a watershed, the sign to Eden that no 'normal diplomatic deals' could be made with the Soviets. This would actually lead to a completely different definition of international relations: from 1948-1949 on, Eden considers world politics as a conflict between two opposing ways of lives instead of a world where ideology is of secondary importance.

After Churchill's famous Iron Curtain speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March 1946, which was followed by the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, Eden, now a Member of the Opposition, remained remarkably co-operative towards the Soviet Union: '[t]here is no reason why the two ideologies should not live together in peace if both will accept not to back their fancies in every other land. Restraint may be difficult to practice, but surely this is not too much to ask as the price for enduring peace', Eden told his audience at Watford, for which speech he was reproached by Churchill who thought it far too friendly<sup>40</sup>. This attitude of Eden's was grounded in the conviction that the Soviets would obey the rules of international relations as long as all parties involved respect one another's legitimate security interest. W.P. Crozier reports of a conversation he had with Eden during the War: '[w]e have to make up our minds on Russia: either she was International Communist in her intentions or she was a Peter-the-Great Russia. Personally he [Eden] was convinced that Stalin's policy was that of a Peter-the-Great Russia and that we could, and therefore must, live with her in Europe (-). Stalin had convinced him that Russia was, and would be, reasonable in her aims'<sup>41</sup>. The Moscow conference between the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain in the Autumn of 1943 convinced Eden that the Soviet Union wished to adhere to 'normal'

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<sup>40</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, p. 416, speech at Watford, 23 September 1946; on Churchill's anger, Carlton, Anthony Eden, p. 269.

<sup>41</sup> W.P. Crozier, Off the Record. Political Interviews 1933-1943, edited with an introduction by A.J.P. Taylor, Hutchinson of London, London, 1973, p. 266, entry 15 January 1942.



diplomacy: '[i]t is a common diplomatic experience to find that problems which seem to present insuperable difficulties when there is no confidence and no mutual trust can fall into a different perspective when once a real basis of goodwill has been established'<sup>42</sup>. Eden was prepared to sympathize with the perceived security dilemma of the Soviet Union, that had experienced several invasions from Europe and therefore looked for certain guarantees. To that purpose Eden was opposed to a paper on postwar arrangements in Europe that circulated in Whitehall which envisaged a Western European Union under British leadership in the framework of the British Empire<sup>43</sup>. Eden argued that this would 'invite Russian animosity and a counter alliance in Eastern Europe. Frank co-operation and friendship with Russia is the proper course'<sup>44</sup>. He more than once declared that Russian foreign policy was dominated by the German attack and by the wish not to see that happen again. He even stated that fears of Soviet domination over Europe were caused by wartime German propaganda. Well into 1948, even after events in Czechoslovakia, Eden repeated that 'while firmness and vigilance are indispensable, neither threats nor bluster are going to get us anywhere. To be unshakable in essentials, to be patient in explanation of what is our point of view, even at the cost of endless repetition, to be cool and to leave the door open for agreement, these should be our present directives'<sup>45</sup>.

This is not to say that Eden had an extremely naive attitude towards the Soviet Union. He recognized the shaking up of the European balance of power at an early stage of the Second World War. In January 1942 he wrote a memorandum to the Cabinet, in which he warned that '[o]n the assumption that Germany is defeated and German military strength is destroyed and that France remains, for a long time at least, a weak power, there will be no counterweight to Russia in Europe [ ]. Russia's position on the European continent will be unassailable [ ]. Russian forces would end the war much deeper into Europe than they began it in 1941 [ ]. It therefore seemed prudent to tie the Soviet Government to agreements as soon as possible'<sup>46</sup>. Eden was by consequence prepared to recognize the Soviet annexation of the

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<sup>42</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, p. 223, speech to the House of Commons, 11 November 1943.

<sup>43</sup> Written by Alfred Duff Cooper, 1st Viscount of Norwich, Minister of Information.

<sup>44</sup> Eden paraphrased by John Colville, John Colville, The Fringes of Power. Downing Street Diaries. Volume Two: 1941-April 1955, Hodder and Stoughton, Sevenoaks, 1985, pp. 131-132, entry 21 August 1944.

<sup>45</sup> Eden, Days for Decisions, pp. 184, press article 16 September 1947. These words are repeated in his speech to the House of Commons, 5 May 1948, ibid., p. 198.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Carlton, Anthony Eden, p. 193.

Baltic states for the sake of an Anglo-Soviet treaty in April 1942<sup>47</sup>. Interview at the time by W. Crozier, he defined the issue as

'[ ] did we or did we not desire to co-operate with Russia with regard to the future of Europe ? He [Eden] believed that Russia was willing to co-operate and that we could work together and he held that this would be of immense importance. If we now refused what Russia desired and maintained she was entitled to on the grounds of her bare security we should run the risk of alienating her and preventing what ought to be a most fruitful co-operation in the future. Further, we could not, of course, prevent Russia from absorbing these (Baltic) States if she desired to [ ]'<sup>48</sup>.

Clearly, then, Eden was prepared to deal with other nations on the basis of the recognition of their mutual legitimate security interests. A fundamental change in his assessment of the Soviet Union did not occur until the Soviets started the Berlin blockade in June 1948. Eden believed it to be a complete break with the past Soviet conduct: 'if there ever was a time to stand firm, it is now; if ever there was a course in which to stand firm, it is this'<sup>49</sup>. But, more importantly in terms of his belief system, Eden believed that the Soviet Union was undermining international stability, firstly by seeking to undermine the authority of a State from within (Germany), and secondly 'by a direct challenge to accepted international agreement' (italics mine)<sup>50</sup>.

The Berlin blockade seems to mark a turning point in the structure of Eden's belief system: no longer does he consider the political system of the opponent as irrelevant to the conduct of international relations: The Berlin blockade has shown that 'two opposing ways of life confront each other. Sometimes there is open conflict. Sometimes there is what is called cold war. But the challenge is always there'. The Soviet Union has made the United Nations, which Eden originally judged to be the institution through which the three Great Powers of the Second World were going to prevent or curb new forms of aggression, unworkable by what

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<sup>47</sup> The Soviet Union eventually dropped the demand for recognition, but Eden's line of reasoning on the matter is important.

<sup>48</sup> As reported by Crozier, Off the Record, p. 315, entry 20 April 1942.

<sup>49</sup> Eden during the debate on Soviet moves towards Berlin, 30 June 1948, in Eden, Days for decision, p. 211.

<sup>50</sup> Eden, Days for decision, speech at the Conservative Party Conference at Llandudno, October 1948, p. 212.

he called 'Soviet abuse of the veto'<sup>51</sup>. The fact that the Soviet Union no longer respected the rules of international conduct, and its attitude towards the United Nations 'has strengthened the need for regional arrangements' (presumably NATO or the 1948 regional defence treaty of Brussels)<sup>52</sup>.

In sum, Eden's view of the Soviet Union are marked by a rather constructive nature until the events of the Berlin blockade: Eden believes that the Soviet Union will respect the rules of international conduct, as long as the West recognizes her security interests, and as long as the Soviet Union respects the West's. The Berlin Blockade, to Eden a violation of an international agreement, is the dividing line. Eden's subsequent definition of international relations as divided into two opposed camps, is a rather puzzling development, that cannot be accounted for by looking at his belief system, although he still refuses to see war as the inevitable outcome: negotiation from strength, 'the only basis which they understand', might still bring the Soviets to their senses<sup>53</sup>.

3. The Middle East. It has already been shown that the Middle East and, especially the Suez Canal, was pivotal to Eden's view of the world's geopolitical configuration. In his view, the Middle East is the crucial connection between the United Kingdom and the largest part of the Commonwealth and Empire. I prefer not to deal with Eden's attitude towards Egypt at this moment (I have dealt with them in chapter 7 in the section on the conclusion of a new Canal treaty with the Egyptian Government). Here I wish to note that those few public references that Eden makes to the Middle East, that do not stress the geopolitical importance of the area, show a remarkable assessment of the damaging role British interference with domestic politics in the Middle East could have on British influence in the area. At the same time, however, in private communications, Eden displays a much tougher attitude to the area whenever he feels that vital British interests are at stake.

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<sup>51</sup> Eden, Days for Decision, pp. 131-133, speech at the Board of Trade, Toronto, Canada, broadcasted nationwide, 24 January 1949.

<sup>52</sup> Eden, Days for Decision, p. 142, speech at Wellington, New Zealand to politicians and corps diplomatique, 11 February 1949.

<sup>53</sup> footnote 44, p. 134.

When in the Summer of 1945 the Persian Government asked the British and Soviet Government to withdraw their troops from their respective zones of influence<sup>54</sup>, the British Government indicated its willingness to comply. Eden hailed Foreign Secretary Bevin's decision, recognizing that 'the last thing we want is a recurrence of the practice of zones of influence and matters of that kind which there were in Persia long ago, and which made us so intensely unpopular in that country for a generation'<sup>55</sup>. A few months later, when the Soviet Union refused to withdraw her troops until a satisfactory settlement regarding joint Soviet-Persian oil well exploitation, and autonomy for Persian Azerbeidjan would have been reached, and indeed the first Cold War confrontation was near hand, Eden judged it bad policy to work out a deal with the Soviet Government that impose a government on Persia that would fit both the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union<sup>56</sup>: 'supposing we and the Russians did agree that one party was better than another, is it really our business to impose that party on Persia, and ought we to? [] In the time of Edward Grey, in 1906, we tried to do that sort of thing. It was a terrible failure and we ourselves absolutely detested by every section of the Persian people'<sup>57</sup>.

It therefore seems that Eden was well aware of the negative consequences British interference with Middle Eastern regimes could have on British long term interests. This indeed, as has been shown, was one of the reasons why in the 1952-1954 period he wanted to conclude a treaty with Egypt, providing for the withdrawal of British troops from the Canal Zone: Eden thought it unrealistic to assume that Great Britain could simply impose its will on Egypt, and tried to convince the Churchill Government of this point. From this perspective, it is not unexpected that Eden's public reaction both to Persian Prime Minister Mussadiq's decision in April 1951 to nationalize British owned oil installations in his country, and to Egyptian pressure to renegotiate the 1936 Suez Canal Treaty with the United Kingdom, was firm, but not calling for military intervention: Eden thought the British should stay in Abadan and take the matter to the International Court of Justice at The Hague<sup>58</sup>. Eden's private

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<sup>54</sup> In the Summer of 1941 Britain and the Soviet Union had forced the Shah to accept the temporary occupation of Persia in order to secure the oil fields, and the transportation of Allied arms to the Soviet Union.

<sup>55</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, pp. 365-366, speech at the House of Commons, 20 August 1945.

<sup>56</sup> Thus protecting British oil interests in the south of Persia.

<sup>57</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, pp. 388-389, speech at the House of Commons, 21 February 1946.

<sup>58</sup> Eden's speeches in Parliament are reported by Carlton, Anthony Eden, pp. 289-290, and James, Anthony Eden, p. 337.

utterances at the time, however, suggest a very different, much tougher attitude. Gifford, the American Ambassador in London, reports of a conversation with Eden over lunch in May 1951.

'Eden told Morrison he felt oil sit[es] in other parts of [the] Near East w[ou]ld tend to degenerate if Iran won out which it might unless something constructive were done by [the] UK. Eden suggested that Uk sh[ou]ld use force [regarding the] Suez Canal issue by sending destroyers with tankers thru Suez Canal and insisting on oil being transported freely thru Canal. He seemed to believe that UK w[ou]ld get away with Egypt and that it would convince [the] N[ear] E[ast] area that UK meant business and w[ou]ld have salutary effect on Iran [] He was saying [] that the use of [a] big stick directly in Suez w[ou]ld be better than directly in Iran which might bring Soviets in from [the] North'<sup>59</sup>.

American Secretary of State Dean Acheson would not believe that Eden entertained such a hawkish opinion, but Ambassador Grifford replied to his chief that Eden had hinted at tougher policies in his Empire Day speech on 24 May 1951, communicating Eden's lines on Iran and Egypt: 'giving away just international rights does not win peace. That is appeasement at its worst. We have been pushed around a little too much of late. That is bad for us and bad for other countries and it is bad for peace. For sometime past I have thought that we should call a halt to that process'<sup>60</sup>.

4. The United States. Eden's attitude towards the United States can be characterized by three dimensions: (1) A growing awareness since the mid-1930s that the preservation of British influence throughout the world is dependent on Anglo-American co-operation. (2) A growing awareness that the United Kingdom is economically strongly dependent on the United States after World War Two. (3) A growing awareness that the United States have a much different evaluation of the British Empire from Great Britain.

4.1 Anglo-American co-operation. In 1937 Eden (and the Imperial Staff) had recognized that Japanese aggression could not be handled by the United Kingdom alone, and that American naval support would be needed. Towards the end of that year Eden wished to draw the United States into closer co-operation with the United Kingdom in order to deal with Mussolini and Hitler, and welcomed a secret initiative by Roosevelt on the matter<sup>61</sup>. Eden,

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<sup>59</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States 1951, Gifford to Secretary of State, 11 May 1951.

<sup>60</sup> ibid., Grifford to Washington, 25 May 1951.

<sup>61</sup> Eventually, Chamberlain rejected Roosevelt's proposal without consulting Eden; the true cause of Eden's resignation in March 1938.

however, warned against the idea that United States would be willing to cooperate because the countries were so much alike: 'I think it is a mistake to attempt to base those relations mainly upon sentiment. [] I think it is also a mistake to try to base them on common origin, or common percentage, or even common language, because there will be occasions when we differ one from the other. But I think it is desirable to base them on their true foundation, which is a common interest in the maintenance of world peace and in preventing a repetition of these catastrophic conflicts every twenty years'<sup>62</sup>. It was obvious that after the Second World War, the United States had become the leading nation<sup>63</sup>. Nevertheless, Eden was convinced that Britain was still a leading nation, thanks to its Empire. Unfortunately, exactly the Empire would be the cause of much misunderstanding.

4.2 Economic dependency. Towards the end of the war Eden realized that the United Kingdom would be economically dependent on the United States for a while. He accepted the necessity of American economic assistance, but remarked that this could reduce British prestige, as the United States would now take most credit for winning the war<sup>64</sup>. The solution to escape from complete dependency was, again, the Empire. Discussing Marshall aid in the House of Commons, Eden remarked that '[w]e cannot become the permanent pensioners of the United States. We have a role of our own to play as the heart and centre of a great Empire'<sup>65</sup>. Preferential trading with Commonwealth nations and the Empire would furnish hard currency and guarantee the reconstruction of the British manufacturing industry. The Empire thus forms the pivot to Eden's thinking after the Second World War: firstly, is a major source of prestige which guarantees British Great Nation status; secondly, it is a crucial means of economic recovery. Unfortunately for Eden, the Empire was the source of much apprehension.

4.3 The place of the Commonwealth and Empire. During the war Eden grew more and more aware that the United States held a much different opinion on the Empire from the British. In general, Eden complained that the Americans did not understand, and did not take the trouble to understand, what, in British eyes, characterized the relationships between the

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<sup>62</sup> Eden, Freedom and order, p. 187, Speech to the House of Commons, April 1943.

<sup>63</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, election broadcast 27 June 1945, p. 353.

<sup>64</sup> Henry Butterfield Ryan, The Vision of Anglo-America. The US/UK Alliance and the Emerging Cold War 1943-1946, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, London, etc., 1987, p. 156.

<sup>65</sup> Eden, Days of decision, p. 24, speech at the House of Commons, 8 July 1947.

nations of the Commonwealth. More in particular, Eden became weary that the Americans might develop an interest in one exclusively British sphere of influence, the Middle East.

Towards the end of 1942, Eden and Churchill did not understand why the Americans were complaining about the British (and Dutch) colonial Empires, while they had guaranteed the integrity of the French territories, 'which is more than we have done'. A report by Colonial Secretary Stanley, approved by Eden, suggested that much criticism was the result of 'complete ignorance regarding conditions in British colonial territories'<sup>66</sup>. In a memorandum on the American attitude towards colonialism, Eden judged that the difference in opinion was fundamental, and could not be changed by, for example, Indian independence; while the United Kingdom considered the Commonwealth as an international organization within which complete self-government was taken for granted, the United States considered it a technique of oppression. In Eden's view, the Americans themselves disliked colonial rule for historical reasons, and had come to rely on different methods: 'as a great power [they] were in a position to press for such economic or political advantages as [] desired in a given area without assuming any responsibility for its administration'<sup>67</sup>.

During and after the war, Eden therefore tried to persuade the American Government, and the American public, that the Empire was something else than harsh colonial rule, 'a family of free nations: free to stay, free to go', and that the world could learn from this example of peaceful coexistence<sup>68</sup>.

As to the British position in the Middle East during the Second World War, Eden felt that the Americans were trying to improve their position in the Middle East by capitalizing on their criticism of British imperialism: according to Eden, the Americans tried to increase their influence in Iran and Saudi Arabia at the expense of the UK. Moreover, he realized that after the war Great Britain would depend on the United States for the development of British oil resources in the Middle East<sup>69</sup>. This fear would return in the early 1950s when the Americans tried to force the British to reach an agreement with the Egyptian government on the Canal issue. Evelyn Shuckburgh, Eden's private secretary between 1951 and 1954, noted that 'A.E.'s

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<sup>66</sup> Report quoted by John J. Sbraga, Anglo-American Relations and Colonialism in East Asia, 1941-1945, Garland, New York and London, 1983, pp. 126-127.

<sup>67</sup> Memorandum by Eden, August 1943, FO 371/35927, F/4767/1943/61, quoted by Sbraga, *ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

<sup>68</sup> Eden, Freedom and Order, speech at Watford, 23 September 1946, p. 416.

<sup>69</sup> James, Anthony Eden, pp. 272 ff.; Sbraga, *ibid.*, pp. 62-67.

conviction is that all the Americans want to do is to replace the French and run Indo-China themselves. "They want to replace us in Egypt too. They want to run the world"<sup>70</sup>.

#### 8.4 The operational code and Anthony Eden's true intentions

I have explained that I have incorporated two checks on the intentions that Eden might have had in making the utterances he made. Firstly, I tried to control for role variables by making a division in different periods during which Eden played different roles in the British political system. Secondly, I tried to get a better grasp of the actual meaning of Eden's statements by making use of both public and private utterances, thus hoping to account for the possibility that he would be tailoring his choice of words to his audience.

##### 8.4.1 Accounting for role variables.

Only on one issue, Eden's attitude towards collective security, can it be said that Eden displayed clearly different opinions in different roles. It seems that his enthusiasm for a system of collective security, in which all members of the international community react, whenever one country commits an act that could be called a severe breach of international law, is clearly linked to his role as a Minister for League of Nations Affairs. Eden made his name as Great Britain's representative at the League of Nations disarmament conference in the early 1930s, and became even more famous when appointed Minister of League of Nations Affairs. In this capacity he emphasizes in his speeches the obsolescence of the system of balance of power and the dangers of secret diplomacy, the classic themes of champions of collective security, because the principle of balance of power could lead to both miscalculation and to misunderstanding and thus to war, as had happened in 1914. Eden considered the League's decision, at his personal initiative, to install an international police force that would keep an eye on the plebiscite in the Saar-area in 1935, as an example of successful collective security through the League. Similarly, he insisted on sanctions through the League against Italy after the latter had invaded Abyssinia, and was the only Cabinet member in favour of an arms embargo.

Despite his enthusiasm for collective security, he gave priority to the interests of the United Kingdom: Eden was opposed to sanctions against Japan, because of its attack on Manchuria in 1934, because, given the absence of the United States and Soviet Union from the League of Nations, Great Britain could not deal with Japanese aggression on her own:

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<sup>70</sup> Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, entry 2 May 1954, p. 187.



'Britain and France were not capable of performing the role of an international police force'<sup>71</sup>. Eden thus was not willing to have British foreign policy determined by decisions made at the League in Geneva<sup>72</sup>. I have argued above that Eden's willingness to impose collective security matters on Italy should be understood in terms of his belief system which stresses the crucial role of the Middle East and the observance of standards of international conduct.

However, after having become Foreign Secretary in December 1935, Eden no longer talks of collective security. Indeed, shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War he would claim that neither collective security nor balance of power politics are reasonable guidelines of foreign policy making.

What must be concluded from this change of belief which seems related to a change of political role? Given the fact that Britain's vital interests remain dominant, the change is not disturbing for an analysis that makes use of an individual's belief system. It points to the possibility, nevertheless, that Eden's assessment of international organizations is not as positive as his speeches seem to suggest: he probably conceives of international organizations as platforms where the world's major powers can work together on the basis of the recognition of their mutual security interests. That is how he expected the United Nations would develop: into a machinery that would prolong the war-time alliance between the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom. Eden considered the United Nations a failure, be it possibly temporary, when the Soviet Union used it right to veto so often. International cooperation is therefore first of all a product of reasonable nation-states; international organizations are vehicles for their interactions but no independent source of cooperation.

No other differences in beliefs occur that can be accounted for by a variation of Eden's political roles. One might have expected a change of Eden's opinions on foreign policy, once he returned to the opposition in 1945. But, consistent with his belief that it was a 'duty to keep foreign affairs out of political controversy', he stuck to his master belief.

#### 8.4.2 Public versus private utterances

No real contradictions between public and private statements appear in the sources that I have consulted. Two troublesome considerations can be made, however: first, a much more precise description of what Eden considers Great Britain's vital interests becomes much more

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<sup>71</sup> Peters, Eden at the Foreign Office, p. 57.

<sup>72</sup> Peters, ibid., p. 26.

evident in private than in public utterances, especially when documents from the Foreign Office are considered. It is obvious that he would not in public speak in favour of handing over the Baltic states to the Soviet Union simply because it was much more in the long term interest of the United Kingdom to try and reach an understanding with the Soviet Union about general post-war arrangements. Second, Eden appears much more hawkish towards Egypt and Iran in 1945-1946 in private than in public. Even though he adjusted his attitude towards Egypt on the consideration that the Suez Canal base was no longer of strategic importance and that Great Britain could not afford to reoccupy Egypt, his exact opinion as to the use of force in international affairs remains unclear.

Insofar as no real contradictions have surfaced, we can for the time being assume that the cognitive belief system of Eden, as looked for with the help of the operational code, is reasonably accurate.

#### 8.5 Implications for the analysis of the Suez crisis

The identification of Anthony Eden's cognitive belief system should enable us to formulate some expectations about Eden's handling of the Suez crisis. The operational code construct does not pretend to be able to give exact predictions as to a politician's behaviour; rather, it sets boundaries on the range of possible interpretations of the nature of a crisis and of incoming information, the number of options available, and their respective evaluation<sup>73</sup>. The central hypothesis of an operational code analysis suggests that in times of political crises a politician will rely on his most fundamental beliefs, his master belief.

This implies, first of all, that, in the case of Sir Anthony Eden, the adherence to accepted standards of international conduct, taking account of nations' legitimate national interests will be the most important consideration. It implies that Eden will not be influenced by the nature of the political regime of his opponent, but rather by the latter's observance of certain agreements. It might thus provide a clue as to why the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, rather than the Czech arms deal, or the sacking of Glubb Pasha by King Hussein, sparked off the crisis: possibly Eden considered this the final proof that Nasser did not respect international agreements. Similarly, it might give us a clue as to when the British Government

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. George, 'The "Causal Nexus" between Cognitive Beliefs and Decision-Making Behavior', pp. 103-104; see for further considerations, Stephen G. Walker and Timothy G. Murphy, 'The Utility of the Operational Code in Political Forecasting', *Political Psychology*, Spring/Summer 1981-1982, pp. 24-60.

decided to no longer consult the American Government on their policies on Suez. This decision refused to take SCUA seriously, in spite of his pledges.

Secondly, this respect for international norms is founded in a respect for mutual legitimate security interests. According to Eden, the Middle East was pivotal to the communication between the United Kingdom and the Empire. The Empire itself was crucial in determining British prestige in the world and in earning hard currencies that could help recovering the British economy. At the same time, Eden recognized that the United States played first fiddle and that the United Kingdom needed the United States in retaining its influence in the world. This suggests that the act of nationalization of the Suez Canal Company will be linked to its function as a line of communication of Commonwealth and Empire. Moreover, Eden will recognize the need to co-operate with the United States until the moment that he feels that the United States are not properly assessing the nature of the British interest involved, or that the United States is evaluating the situation in terms of English imperialism. Actually, during the Suez crisis the moment at which communication between the UK and the USA was severed, coincided with a tough speech by Dulles in which he accused the British and French governments of old fashioned imperialism.

Thirdly, Eden's view of international organizations stresses the role they can play as long as the main powers of the international system co-operate on the basis of the recognition of their mutual legitimate security interests, and are prepared to use international organizations on the basis of some consensus of international stability. By 1949 Eden has reached the conclusion that, for the time being, the United Nations have made useless by Soviet vetoes. This suggests that in times of crisis Eden will be reluctant to take recourse to the United Nations.

The construction of Sir Anthony Eden's operational code thus provides a set of lenses that will affect perception and appreciation of a situation in foreign affairs. It should now be ascertained to what extent it contributes to understanding British foreign policy making during the Suez crisis.

## **Chapter 9: Interlude: Suez as a case study in crisis decision making**

### **9.1 Introduction**

British decision making during the Suez crisis should be understood in terms of the perceptions and expectations of foreign policy makers. Chapter 7 has demonstrated how the general orientation of British foreign policy makers has been shaped by the Anglo-American security regime between 1951 and 1955. Chapter 8 has shown that Anthony Eden's cognitive belief system is characterized by various elements that do not surface in the so-called attitudinal prism of British foreign policy makers. Both the attitudinal prism and Eden's operational code have generated several expectations as to how British foreign policy makers, and Eden in particular, would approach the Suez crisis. This brings up the notion of an international crisis situation.

Explanations that rely on the role of cognitive beliefs partly depend on the assumption that in crisis situations decision making will take place on a higher level than usual, thus reducing the potential impact of bureaucratic politics. Moreover, the operational code construct suggests that in situations of crisis, individuals will rely on their most fundamental beliefs, that is, especially their master beliefs, in order to cope with the emotional stress that is generated. Furthermore, the likelihood that small group factors, such as groupthink, may come into play, is related to the presence of high stress that is generated by external threats. It is therefore important to discuss the relationship between international crisis and the occurrence of high stress and, subsequently, to determine the exact period of the Suez crisis that will be relevant to an analysis of individual cognitive beliefs and small group processes. Section 9.2 will thus deal with the interconnection between international crisis and high stress. Next, section 9.3 will confine the exact period of the Suez crisis for this study. Finally, section 9.4 offers a description of the research strategy that is to be followed in an analysis of the British decision making process during the Suez crisis that focuses on individual cognitive beliefs and small group processes.

### **9.2 International crisis and high stress**

#### **9.2.1 The concept of international crisis**

The use of the notion of international crisis has given rise to several conceptions of the phenomenon. First of all, a distinction can be made between an objectivistic and a subjectivistic approach: the former approach considers an international crisis to be a type of

situation that can be defined by the analyst from the outside. It thus refers to those international situations that can be argued to be a disruption of (part of) the international system or a sudden change in one or more systemic variables. The latter approach thinks of international crisis as a situation which is perceived as such by decision makers themselves. It thus relates to real-world experiences of politicians in various countries<sup>1</sup>.

This study can be considered an objectivistic study of international crisis, to the extent that it tries to account for the behaviour of nation-states in a period which could be characterized as a disruption of the international system because of its change from a multipolar into a bipolar world. The period that is usually called the Suez crisis, is an important element of that period of change. Nevertheless, this study is also using the subjectivistic approach to international crises, because British decision making during the Suez crisis, and the role of individual and small group factors, is related to the perceptions of individual decision makers, and their impression of the occurrence of a crisis situations. It is to a subjectivistic definition of international crisis that we now turn.

Two elements are part of subjectivistic definitions of international crisis. The first element is the perception of a threat to one's country's important values<sup>2</sup>. Although various definitions are used, most authors agree that certain core values are perceived to be threatened, such as territorial integrity, economic survival, or a nation's standing in the world<sup>3</sup>. The second element is the perception of a certain restriction in time that is available to reach a decision<sup>4</sup>. This element of time is difficult to confine in a clear manner. Sometimes, an

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<sup>1</sup> See for the distinction between objectivistic and subjectivistic notions of international crises (or systemic and decision making notions, as they are respectively called as well), Charles F. Hermann, 'International Crisis as a Situational Variable', in James N. Rosenau (ed.), International Relations and Foreign Policy, The Free Press, New York, 1969, pp. 411-416; Jonathan Roberts, Decision-Making during International Crises, pp. 14-15, 36-37.

<sup>2</sup> Hermann has been the first to systematically theorize about the concept of international crisis. He originally spoke of a threat to 'high priority goals' and of 'restricted amount of time available', 'International Crisis as a Situational Variable', p. 414. Later, he would speak of 'high treat to important values', Charles F. Hermann and Robert E. Mason, 'Identifying Behavioral Attributes of Events That Trigger International Crises', in Ole R. Holsti, a.o. (eds.), Change in the International System, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 1980, p. 193. Brecher and Wilkenfeld prefer the term 'basic values', Michael Brecher and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, 'Crises in World Politics', World Politics, (34), 3, 1982, p. 382.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Roberts, Decision-Making during International Crises, pp. 51-56.

<sup>4</sup> Hermann and Mason talk of a 'relatively short period of time (a few days at the most) for a decision before the situation evolves unfavorably', Hermann and Mason 'Identifying Behavioral Attributes', p. 193; Brecher and Wilkenfeld prefer the term 'finite time', Brecher and Wilkenfeld, 'Crises in World Politics', p. 382; Cable emphasizes 'a sense of urgency', James Cable 'The Identification of Crisis', International Relations, (8), 2, 1984, p. 120.

external factor leaves no doubt as to a deadline to reach a decision, for instance, when an ultimatum has been issued. Usually, however, a deadline seems absent: indeed, by intuition at least, international crises often seem to last months rather than hours or days. Brecher and Wilkenfeld therefore argue that 'finite time' would be a better definition<sup>5</sup>.

It should however be recognized that time restrictions in international crises are not always determined by the threatening situation: rather, time constraints are often self-imposed<sup>6</sup>, not only because decision makers feel they should reply within a brief space of time, but also because the very feeling of insecurity about the duration of the crisis contributes to the feeling that only a swift reply would be suitable. A definition of international crisis should therefore refer to perceived time constraints.

A third element of existing definitions of international crisis, perceived surprise<sup>7</sup>, is much disputed. Surprise may not be a necessary part of a definition of crisis at all<sup>8</sup>. In principle, however, it could be argued that an actor that is caught by surprise will be relatively unprepared. Such a situation might then affect the quality of the decision making process, resulting, for instance, in a frantic search for alternative courses of action.

Surprise may thus add to a policymaker's perception of time constraints, but it implies that perception of time is the more important variable. Surprise may affect the start of a crisis, as well as the challenged actor's initial handling of the situation, but it is not a necessary element of a definition of crisis<sup>9</sup>. Brecher has suggested that surprise be replaced with decision makers' expectation that the involvement of military hostilities will be likely<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Brecher and Wilkenfeld, 'Crises in World Politics', p. 382.

<sup>6</sup> During the 1962 Cuban missile crisis the limited amount of time available may have seemed imposed on the Executive Committee by the fact that with a limited number of days these discovered missiles would become operational. But, as a matter of fact, this time perspective was self-imposed, because operational missiles were a threat only because of American decisionmakers' idea that these medium range missiles were a threat to U.S. national security.

<sup>7</sup> Surprise was part of Hermann's original definition, 'International Crisis as a Situational Variable', p. 414.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Roberts, Decision-Making during International Crises, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Hermann and Mason recognized this and left surprise out of Hermann's original definition of international crisis.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Brecher, Decision in Crisis: Israel, 1967 and 1973, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1980, p. 6. A similar solution is suggested by Lebow, who stresses policymakers' perception that any actions on their part to counter the threat (apart from capitulation) will raise the prospect of war; Lebow, Between Peace and War, pp. 14-15.

If one adopts Brecher's definition, it becomes possible to mark out the crisis period. The start of an international crisis is characterized by a sharp increase of a policy maker's perception that, first, basic values are under threat, second, relatively little time is available to take decisions, and, third, military hostilities are highly probable. This definition makes it possible to clearly separate the start of the crisis period from the pre-crisis period. The latter is characterized by a specific event which triggers an increase in threat perception, but not in perceptions of restricted time or probable hostilities<sup>11</sup>. The end of a crisis is marked by a drop in the perceptions of all three elements.

### 9.2.2 The consequences of crisis for decision making

The occurrence of a crisis situation is bound to provoke emotional stress among decisionmakers. Threat perception is the necessary link between the crisis-triggering event and the arousal of stress, because the event incites the anticipation of harm. It is important to realize that threat perception entails both an emotional and a cognitive element. On the one hand, the feeling that one is in danger, the gut feeling, is inherent to it; on the other hand, threat perception is also a cognitive phenomenon, because it presumes that decisionmakers have learned to recognize what constitutes a threat in international politics<sup>12</sup>.

Basically, through the arousal of emotional stress a crisis situation has its bearing on, first, the structure of decision making and, second, the decision making process.

(1) Structure of decision making: the decision making process is likely to be centralized. Key decisionmakers will be involved, very often in ad hoc groups. By consequence, information will be processed at a higher level, resulting in a reduced likelihood that standard operation procedures will be adopted. The installation of small decision making units will reduce the impact of parochial interests, simply because less persons will be involved. From this point of view, a higher quality of decision making can be expected<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Brecher, Decisions in Crisis, pp. 23-25. The end of the crisis-period is characterized by a sharp decline in the intensity of all three crisis elements. If the post-crisis period is characterized by the outbreak of war, it should be seen as a decline in the image of greater military capability vis-a-vis the enemy. This would make it difficult to define the start of the post crisis period of Suez, when the United Kingdom's principal enemy was United States diplomacy rather than the Egyptian army.

<sup>12</sup> Raymond Cohen, Threat Perception in International Crisis, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, pp. 6-9, 80-81. Jervis shows how beliefs and motives direct policymakers' threat perceptions, Robert Jervis, 'Perceiving and coping with threat', in Robert Jervis a.o., Psychology and Deterrence, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1985, pp. 18-27.

<sup>13</sup> Ole R. Holsti and Alexander L. George, 'The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy Makers', in Cornelius P. Cotter, Political Science Annual. An International Review, Volume 6, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis, 1975, pp. 293-303.

(2) Decision making process: the reduced impact of organizational processes is compensated for, however, by the potentially increased influence of individual and small group variables. Experimental evidence shows that, although medium levels of emotional stress may actually be beneficial to an individual's cognitive performance, high levels of stress tend to reduce the ability of both individuals and groups to process information accurately. Small decision making units can fall prey to groupthink. This may eventually result in defective decision-making<sup>14</sup>, leading to an emphasis on short-term considerations, the reliance on easy decision rules and ready historical analogies, as well as an tendency to stick with goals that were formulated at the outset of the crisis<sup>15</sup>.

In sum, a crisis can be defined as a situation that is characterized by a sharp increase in the perception (1) of a threat to basic values, (2) that relatively little time is available to take decisions, and (3) that military hostilities are probable. This increase arouses emotional stress, the level of which may even be aggravated if the crisis is provoked by an event that comes as a surprise. Emotional stress, in turn, affects the quality and outcome of the decision making process.

### 9.3 How to identify the Suez crisis

The start of the Suez crisis can be traced the evening of 26 July 1956, when President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company in response to the Anglo-American decision to withdraw an offer to lend Egypt money to construct the Aswan high dam. It is sometimes suggested that the crisis found its origins in the Glubb affair of early 1956, when King Hussein of Jordan dismissed the British Commander of the Arab Legion, Sir John Glubb, allegedly at the instigation of Nasser. Some accounts suggest that the British Cabinet decided to stop to seek cooperation with the Egyptian leader. Moreover, an infuriated Eden, who had lost his temper in Parliament over the Glubb affair, is said to have decided to destroy Nasser<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Some examples of defective decision making include: discussion of only a small range of alternative courses of action; no thorough survey of objectives and values implicated by the choice of a course of action; lack of careful weighing of costs and benefits of its alternative; absence of a permanent search for information about all options; refusal to take new information seriously; no full review of all aspects of alternatives before taking a final decision; failure to make contingency plans. A full account of the quality of decision making can be found in Janis and Mann, Decision Making, pp. 10-14.

<sup>15</sup> Ole R. Holsti, Crisis, Escalation, War, McGill Queens University Press, Montreal, and London, 1972, pp. 14-23; Holsti and George, 'The Effects of Stress', pp. 275-284.

<sup>16</sup> Nutting, No End of a Lesson. The Story of Suez, Constable, 1967, pp. 17, 32-37.



However, the Glubb affair cannot be considered the start of the Suez crisis, because it contains only one aspect of the chosen crisis definition, that is, an increase in threat perception. No increase in the perception of time constraints or the likelihood of military hostilities can be observed: it is true that the Cabinet decided to change its Egyptian policies, but this was not conceived in terms of an immediate response. Rather, the British Government decided to intensify Anglo-American coordination of Middle East policy, based on the consensus that a tougher line towards Nasser would be likely at some stage. The withdrawal of the Aswan loan in July 1956 would be the main example of this tougher attitude. It is thus more appropriate to consider the Glubb affair as the start of the pre-crisis period<sup>17</sup>.

The nationalization of the Suez Canal Company counts as the start of the crisis period, because all three elements of definition seems present. Nasser's move was perceived a serious threat to British interests and assets in the Middle East. Moreover, the British Cabinet perceived a limited amount of time available for a response, because a 'failure to hold the Suez Canal would lead inevitably to the loss one by one of all our interests and assets in the Middle East'. Third, it was recognized that the Suez Canal might be held only by the threat with, and even use of, force<sup>18</sup>. The sense of crisis may have been aggravated by the considerable surprise of British policymakers at Nasser's move. Given the purpose of this study to solve the 'puzzle of Suez', the crisis entered its post-crisis phase with the Cabinet's decision of 6 November to accept the United Nations resolution that called for a cease-fire<sup>19</sup>. It ended with the Cabinet's agreement on 3 December to withdraw British troops in order to obtain American financial assistance<sup>20</sup>. The Suez crisis is thus defined as the period between 26 July and 6 November 1956.

This confinement is of considerable methodological importance, because a crisis period is expected to be characterized by a sharp increase in the level of emotional stress, which may in turn influence the quality and outcome of the decision making process. On the empirical

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<sup>17</sup> Appendix 2 offers a detailed analysis of the question whether the Glubb affair constituted the start of the Suez crisis.

<sup>18</sup> CAB 128/30, CM(56)54, 27 July 1956.

<sup>19</sup> It could be argued that after the cease-fire a crisis of different nature had to be faced, that is, the defence of Sterling in face of American opposition to British and French reluctance to withdraw from the area they had occupied on 5-6 November 1956, and the guarantee of oil supply after the subsequent closure of the Suez Canal.

<sup>20</sup> Kyle, *Suez*, pp. 510-514.

level, however, it is extremely complicated to tell symptoms of perceptions of crisis from symptoms of emotional stress.

#### 9.4 The interrelationship between crisis, stress and decision making

In practice, it is very difficult to separate symptoms of crisis and stress. The literature on cognitive psychology shows that time pressure does indeed generate emotional stress, but it is equally true that aroused stress itself causes a sense of time constraints<sup>21</sup>. It may thus happen that the marking out of a crisis situation, by looking for perceptions of time pressure, involves the use of indicators are themselves a product rather than a generator of stress. Possibly, this problem may be pragmatically solved if one wants to confine a crisis period. It returns in a more dangerous fashion, once one starts looking for a relationship between an increase in levels of emotional stress and the decision making process. Very often, changes in the decision making process, or judgments about its quality are presented as evidence of high levels of stress. Theoretically, however, high stress is supposed to affect the decision making process<sup>22</sup>.

Ideally, stress generated by perceptions of crisis should be measured independently from the consequences it may have on the decision making process. Two solutions to this problem have been suggested. One solution would be to try to measure to what extent policy makers suffer from high stress. Next, these data should be confronted with, on the one hand, data on perceptions of threat and time pressure, and, on the other hand, symptoms of defective decision making. This solution has been proposed by Margaret Hermann<sup>23</sup>, who developed several verbal and non-verbal indicators of the presence of aroused stress among decisionmakers: she suggests to look for evidence of flustered speech, increased speech tempo, body tension, irritability, signs of distress on the individual's face, hyper-vigilance<sup>24</sup>, and changes in the quality of the individual's voice. Lots of problems are involved, however, in

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<sup>21</sup> Holsti, Crisis, Escalation, War, pp. 14-15; Holsti and George, 'The Effects of Stress', p. 280.

<sup>22</sup> This problem is worrying Shlaim in his application of the Brecher-model to the 1948-1949 Berlin Blockade crisis: he warns against the danger of falling into the trap of using the presence of indications of defective decisionmaking as proof of the presence of high stress. However, a resolution for the problem of collinearity of stress and time constraints, cannot be easily offered, Shlaim, The United States and the Berlin Blockade, 1948-1949, pp. 402-405.

<sup>23</sup> Margaret C. Hermann, 'Indicators of Stress in Policymakers During Foreign Policy Crises', Political Psychology, (1), 1, 1979, pp. 29-34.

<sup>24</sup> The original term is 'vigilance' instead of hyper-vigilance, but the indicators (increased eye-contact and postural rigidity) refer to the category which Janis and Mann have coined hyper-vigilance.

the use of verbal and nonverbal indicators<sup>25</sup>, the most important one being the fact that most data on the indicators mentioned are derived from public statements of foreign policymakers. During international crises these are often held when decisionmakers have already made up their minds about the nature of the threat, and often have already taken a decision. Very crucial elements of an analysis of decision making are thus unlikely to be captured. It becomes thus difficult to relate indicators of high stress to the decision making process itself.

A second remedy would be to measure the existence of a crisis situation in an indirect manner. One example is Holsti's study of the outbreak of the First World War. Holsti suggests to use, on the one hand, the level and intensity of communications between actors in a crisis and, on the other hand, the actors' perception of international hostility<sup>26</sup>. He found that in a situation of increasing stress, actors tended to perceive their range of alternatives to be shrinking and those of their opponents to be expanding. They thus perceived themselves to be reacting to their opponent's behaviour as if under conditions of necessity, while they perceived their opponent to have alternative courses of action which might avoid further escalation<sup>27</sup>. Holsti's analysis suggests that changes in intensity of communications can serve as an indirect indicator of levels of crisis and stress, which can then be related to the decision making process. It may thus be possible to separate the measurement of stress from the measurement of its consequences.

As a matter of fact, the intensity of communications between actors during the Suez crisis has been a subject of study. Edward Azar conducted a quantitative study of hostile signals between Egypt and the United Kingdom<sup>28</sup>. Employing data from the so-called Conflict and Peace Data Bank, he coded 169 signals about Egypt that were communicated by the United Kingdom between July 26, 1956 and January 11, 1957<sup>29</sup>, making use of a 13-points scale with categories ranging from very friendly to very hostile. In terms of Holsti's suggestion, these utterances of hostility could serve as evidence of variations in levels of stress. Unfortunately, if one compares the level of hostility with evidence from primary sources about

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<sup>25</sup> Cohen even claims that these indications cannot be taken to be sufficient evidence of high stress, Cohen, *Threat Perception in International Crisis*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Holsti, *Crisis, Escalation, War*, pp. 27-49.

<sup>27</sup> This is called the Fundamental Attribution Error; Holsti, *ibid.*, pp. 143-168.

<sup>28</sup> Edward E. Azar, 'Conflict Escalation and Conflict Reduction in an International Crisis: Suez, 1956', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, (16), 2, 1972, pp. 183-201.

<sup>29</sup> The day when all occupying forces had withdrawn or were about to withdraw from Egypt. This study deals with the Suez crisis until the day of the cease-fire, 6 November 1956.

what seem to have been crucial decision moments, then it must be noted that these hardly coincide with an increase in hostility: for instance, no hostile signals were sent from Britain to Egypt between 15 and 25 August: at first sight, this seems relatively easy to explain because, in that period, a diplomatic solution was sought at the first London Conference. However, primary sources show that the British Cabinet was facing a pressing dilemma towards 23 and 24 August, insecure whether it would be justified to go to war after a possibly unsatisfactory outcome of the Conference, and decided to temporarily play down its hostile attitude towards Egypt for the sake of domestic and international public opinion.

A second, even more awkward, puzzle is presented by the period between 14 and 23 October: no hostility signals are coded for this period, although in those days, with the visit of General Maurice Challe to Eden at Chequers and meetings of the inner circle of the British Cabinet, the foundations were laid for Israeli involvement in an Anglo-French policing operation<sup>30</sup>. Indirect indicators of crisis and stress may therefore turn out to be less an indicator of the arousal of stress among decision makers than the, even deliberate, product of foreign policy choices.

How then can it be demonstrated that British decision makers suffered from high emotional stress during the Suez crisis? Janis and Mann advance the thesis that so-called decisional conflicts are an important source of stress. These decisions contain the high risk of suffering serious losses, no matter which course of action is selected, as perceived by the decisionmaker<sup>31</sup>. The adoption of the concept of decisional conflict should enable us to identify the most important decisions that were taken during the Suez crisis. These decisions will be defined as those situations that produced the perception of a serious dilemma, that is, a choice between alternatives each of which would entail important losses.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Azar, 'Conflict Escalation and Conflict Reduction in an International Crisis: Suez, 1956', p. 191, table 3, and p. 192, figure 1.

<sup>31</sup> Janis and Mann, *Decision Making*, pp. 45-52. Janis and Mann call these decisional conflicts 'hot cognitions'; decisionmakers show hesitation, vacillation, feelings of uncertainty and signs of acute emotional stress, as well as feelings of apprehensiveness, a desire to escape from the dilemma, and self-blame for having manoeuvred oneself into such a situation, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47. These 'hot cognitions' differ from 'cold cognitions' in that they do not involve routine decision making.

### 9.5 Decisional conflicts in the United Kingdom during Suez

I suggest to subdivide the decision making process in the United Kingdom during the Suez crisis into six decisional conflicts. Because of its nature, each decisional conflict is assumed to arouse emotional stress with British policymakers. Individual and group variables are thus expected to have had an important influence on the decision making process.

Decision 1 (26 July-2 August). British policymakers were faced with the dilemma of how to respond vigorously to the Egyptian challenge of nationalizing the Suez Canal Company without alienating the United States and endangering Britain's long term interests in the Middle East. An immediate military attack was considered, either with airborne troops or with bombardments; another important plan involved an invasion of Egypt by British troops in eastern Libya. On 2 August it was agreed to call for a Conference of the original signatories of the 1888 Constantinople Conference that had established the international character of the Suez Canal Company.

Decision 2 (2 August-22 August, 2 A.M.). The dilemma facing British policymakers was to determine what would be a satisfactory outcome of the London Conference. Could they accept an outcome that would not declare them outright winners? In the early morning of 22 August, at the request of Eden, Dulles, and Lloyd, the Australian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, accepted to head a delegation to Egypt.

Decision 3 (2 August, 2 A.M.-11 September). British policymakers had to respond to the possible failure of Menzies's mission. Should they refer the matter to United Nations, despite American reluctance to such a move; or should they agree to Dulles's proposal for a Users' Conference? On 11 September the British Cabinet accepted the S.C.U.A. proposal; that same day the Suez Canal Company recalled its pilots from Egypt.

Decision 4 (19 September-23 September). British policymakers had to find a response to a possibly unsatisfactory outcome of the S.C.U.A. Conference. On 23 September the British Government decided to refer their case to the Security Council of the United Nations, despite American opposition.

Decision 5 (23 September-25 October). British policymakers were facing three dangerous developments. First, a possibly unsatisfactory outcome of negotiations between France, Egypt and the United Kingdom at the United Nations; second, the Winter Plan presented by the Chiefs of Staff which called off any military operation before Spring 1957 and thus weakened British leverage on Egypt; third, the likelihood that the United States would not be prepared to use S.C.U.A. as a tool of putting Nasser under pressure. On 24 October

the British Cabinet accepted to intervene in the event of an Israeli attack on Egypt that threatened the flow of traffic in the Suez Canal.

Decision 6 (25 October-4 November). British decision makers had to face mounting pressure of international public opinion calling for a cease-fire, especially at the General Assembly of the United Nations, including the United States. Moreover, Israel (temporarily) complied with the British-French ultimatum to stay away from the Suez Canal, thus depriving the United Kingdom and France of their pretext to occupy the Canal Zone. To stop the operations would imply the abandonment of one of its principal goals, the toppling of Nasser. On 4 November, the Cabinet decided to go on with the operations, and, as a matter of fact, to drop airborne troops one day earlier than planned.

The actual analysis of the decision making process in chapters 10-17 will follow this subdivision of the crisis period into 6 decisional conflicts. It will be a practical tool for both the assessment the role of the various independent and constraining variables, and the observation of changes in the structure of decision making and quality of the decision making process.

**PART IV: BRITISH DECISION MAKING DURING THE SUEZ CRISIS**

### Introduction to Part IV

Part IV will assess the role of two independent variables, individual cognitive beliefs and groupthink, and two constraining variables, the organizational context and considerations of domestic politics, on the decision making process in the United Kingdom during the Suez crisis. This will take three steps. First, chapters 10-15 present six decisional conflicts during the crisis. Their aim is to reconstruct the structure of the decision making process, identifying, where possible, formal and informal meetings as well as their participants. Second, they mark out the possible operation of each variable. Their third purpose is to make the reader familiar with the historical development of the Suez crisis.

The next step is an assessment in chapter 16 of the relative weight of each variable on the outcome of each decisional conflict. Moreover, given the considerable influence of groupthink, attention is paid to the presence of antecedent conditions of groupthink. A final step is made in chapter 17, when the question will be answered whether cognitive beliefs contribute to solving the puzzle of Suez.

Analyses of crisis decision making suggest that, once a crisis starts, decision making shifts to a higher level. Often, *ad hoc* bodies are formed to handle the new, threatening situation. As a matter of fact, after Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal, the British Cabinet appointed a special emergency committee in order to deal with this crisis. This committee became subsequently known as the Egypt Committee<sup>1</sup>. It is tempting to consider this group as the most important decision making unit<sup>2</sup>, and, because of its small size and relative insulation from the Government, a most likely candidate for groupthink. The reconstruction of the decision making process in chapters 10 through 15, however, makes it clear that the unit of decision making differs at each decisional conflict. At least three different

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<sup>1</sup> The Egypt Committee was the second of its kind since World War Two: in 1951 Prime Minister Attlee had set up a similar emergency committee in order to deal with the Abadan crisis, Colin Seymour-Ure, 'British "War Cabinets" in Limited Wars: Korea, Suez, and the Falklands', *Public Administration*, (62), 1984, pp. 185-186.

<sup>2</sup> R.A. Butler, Lord Privy Seal at the time of Suez, suggested afterwards that the appointment of the Egypt Committee had been used by Eden to reduce the importance of the Cabinet. According to Butler, the Egypt Committee was not set up by the Cabinet; 'it was the Prime Minister who set up a Cabinet committee []; the Cabinet would probably not have agreed to set up such a committee. The Prime Minister of the day thought these matters in the Suez were best handled by a Suez committee of the Cabinet, and that was a representative body [] which met regularly to discuss what is called the Suez crisis. The Cabinet came very little into the Suez crisis until towards the end'; 'Reflection on Cabinet Government', Lord Butler interviewed by Norman Hunt (Reprinted from *The Listener*, 16 September 1965, pp. 407-411), in Valentine Herman and James E. Alt (eds.), *Cabinet Studies: A Reader*, Macmillan, London, 1975, p. 202.



units of decision making should therefore be distinguished: first, the full Cabinet, second, the Egypt Committee, and third, an inner group of senior ministers who regularly hold informal meetings.

Finally, sometimes reference will be made to the so-called Defence (Transition) Committee, that was re-activated on 28 July 1956. It consisted of all Permanent Under Secretaries within the Government and was chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Norman Brook<sup>3</sup>. This committee dealt with the organization of various non-military aspects of the decisions that were taken by the Egypt Committee, such as the civil administration of Egyptian territory that might have to be occupied in the event of military action.

Chapters 10-15, each dealing with one decisional conflict, will present an overview of the structure of day-to-day decision making during the crisis. Much effort has been put into the reconstruction of the chronology of informal meetings of senior ministers. This reconstruction is based on the close reading of the archives at the Public Record Office, and of memoirs and diaries of participants of the Suez crisis. To that end, the personal diary of engagements of Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd<sup>4</sup> and William Clark's 'Whitehall diary'<sup>5</sup>, have been especially valuable sources of information. Although such a reconstruction can only be partial, it should nevertheless be attempted if the weight of an inner group of ministers is to be appreciated.

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<sup>3</sup> William Clark, 'Whitehall Diary', entry 1 August 1956, p. 104, William Clark Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

<sup>4</sup> FO 800/713-717, Public Record Office, Kew.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 3.

## Chapter 10: Decision 1: diplomacy instead of immediate attack

### 10.1 Introduction

In the morning of 30 July 1956 the Egypt Committee decided to hold a diplomatic conference as a response to Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company four days earlier. On 1 August this decision was confirmed by the Cabinet. It was also agreed to invite those states that had signed the 1888 Constantinople Convention, which had established the Suez Canal as an international waterway. The Egypt Committee's choice in favour of diplomatic response raises the question why a conference was preferred to a military confrontation. This chapter will formulate an answer to that question in three steps. First, the structure of decision making will be reconstructed in order to assess to what extent various decision making units have played a role (section 10.2). Next, the terms are examined in which British policymakers originally formulated the problem, and how this influenced their assessment of various courses of action (section 10.3). Third, it will be shown to what the four independent and constraining variables can be said to have played a role in the decision to hold a diplomatic conference (section 10.4).

### 10.2 The structure of decision making

A first Step towards understanding the decision to prefer diplomacy over military action, it is important to reconstruct the decision making process. The relevant decision period stretches from the evening of 26 July, which was the moment the British Government learned of Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal Company, until the Cabinet meeting of 1 August at 7.20 P.M.. The following chart gives a picture of the structure of the decision making process.

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**Chart 10.1: Decision making structure of decision 1**

26 July	10.30 PM-4AM	Informal meeting (Eden, Salisbury, Home, Lloyd, Kilmuir, Caccia, Chauvel, Piquot, Foster, Mountbatten, Templer).
27 July	before 11 AM 11 AM 11.10 AM 5 PM 6.30 PM 7 PM	Eden telephones Macmillan House of Commons statement Cabinet (Cab) Defence (Transition) Committee (DTC) Eden and Lloyd meet Commonwealth ministers Egypt Committee (EC)
28 July	10.30 AM-lunch	EC

30 July	10.30 AM	EC
	lunch	lunch Eden, Lloyd, Macmillan, Pineau, Murphy
	17.45 PM	EC
	dinner	dinner Murphy, Macmillan, Foster, Lord Alexander
31 July	9.45 AM	Meeting Eden, Watkinson, Head, Brook, CIGS, QMG
	'morning'	Lloyd meets the 1922 Committee of Backbenchers of Conservative Party
	'lunch'	lunch with Eden, Murphy, Lloyd, Salisbury, Macmillan, 'and three Americans'
	3.30 PM	EC
	5.30 PM	DTC
1 Aug	10.00 PM	EC
	'morning'	Home meets Commonwealth ministers
	12 noon	EC
	'afternoon'	Macmillan, Dulles, Murphy, Aldrich
	7.20 PM	Cabinet

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A first glance at chart 1 allows for four observations: first, the full Cabinet is only sparsely involved. It convenes at the beginning (27 July) and at the end (1 August), but does not meet in between. Moreover, its very first meeting is preceded by an informal meeting at 10, Downing Street, which lasted more than 5 hours. Second, decision making seems dominated by meetings of the Egypt Committee. Third, although in this record of meetings the formal tripartite conversations between the representatives of France, Great Britain, and the United States are not shown, it appears that, starting from 30 July, they are paralleled by meetings between American and British officials alone<sup>1</sup>, thus giving testimony of the uneasiness that both Americans and British felt about co-operation with the French<sup>2</sup>, and possibly of the traditional British view of privileged co-operation with the Americans. Fourth, Eden's phonecall to Macmillan in the morning of 27 July shows Macmillan's weight within the Government. During the phonecall Eden and Macmillan discussed the phrasing of the short

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<sup>1</sup> The first tripartite meeting, with Lloyd, Pineau, and Murphy present, was early on Sunday 29 July 1956, while Eden was making a speech in Wiltshire; Thomas, *The Suez Affair*, p. 56; talks were resumed in the morning of 30 July. An informal lunch followed the 10.30 EC meeting. Next morning's tripartite meeting was followed by a lunch at which Eden, Murphy, Salisbury, Macmillan, Lloyd 'and three Americans' were present; Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors*, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> British reluctance to cooperation with France is briefly analyzed by Adamthwaite; Anthony Adamthwaite, 'La France pendant la crise de Suez vue par la Grande-Bretagne', *Relations Internationales*, no. 58, Summer 1989, pp. 187-194, esp. 189-193.

statement that Eden would pronounce at the House of Commons that morning at 11<sup>3</sup>. Even allowing for Butler's illness at the time, it seems strange that Eden did not consult him, and that he did not include Butler among the original members of the Egypt Committee<sup>4</sup>. More evidence of Macmillan's influence comes from his presence, and Butler's absence<sup>5</sup>, at informal meetings with Pineau, Murphy and Dulles. But, much more importantly, Macmillan was consulted by Eden about the contents of the letter that would be sent to President Eisenhower, following the Cabinet meeting of 27 July<sup>6</sup>. These four considerations should be taken into account in an analysis of the decision making process around decision 1.

### 10.3 The definition of the problem

The original definition of the problem is of crucial importance: it constrains discussion and decisions in subsequent meetings. In the case of Suez, it should be determined what meeting has set the boundaries of the problem: the informal meeting on 26 July, the first Cabinet meeting next morning, or the first meeting of the Egypt Committee. The records, however, do not allow a definite answer.

No full account exists of the first informal meeting after the news of the nationalization broke through. Eden is said to have declared Nasser's behaviour an act of aggression to which he wished to respond forcefully and immediately. The Chiefs of Staffs present (Mountbatten [Navy], Dickson [RAF], Templer [Imperial Staff]) reckoned that the United Kingdom's military forces were not prepared for this type of crisis<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, in the Commons next morning Eden made a very cautious statement, talking about rights and interests affected, and about consultations between Governments concerned, avoiding the question of force<sup>8</sup>. At the

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<sup>3</sup> Harold Macmillan, Riding the Storm, 1956-1959, Macmillan, London, etc., 1971, p. 101, diary entry 27 July 1956. The first version of the statement had been formulated the night before by the Cabinet members present at the dinner in the honour of the King of Iraq.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas claims that this was considered as a victory of Macmillan who was competing with Butler for being second-in-command, The Suez Affair, pp. 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> Despite his recovery on 30 July.

<sup>6</sup> Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard Mosley, Dulles, quoted by James, Anthony Eden, p. 454; cf. Kyle, Suez, pp. 136-137. Kyle suggests that Eden dominated this meeting, quoting Clark; Clark's original diary, however, does not allow for that conclusion; cf. footnote 8.

<sup>8</sup> James quotes William Clark as having confirmed the 'complete accuracy of [Mosley's] quotation', Anthony Eden, p. 454, footnote \*; Clark's original diary, however, reads: 'Then I went down to No. (continued...)

first meeting of the Chiefs of Staff on 27 July at 9.15 A.M. Mounbatten reported that 'Ministers had already given consideration to the attitude the U.K. should adopt in the situation and had decided that until the views of other interested powers had been obtained no action should be taken which could be construed as threatening Egypt'<sup>9</sup>. British decision makers thus did not want to strike immediately, even if such a coup de main were possible given the doubts Mounbatten, Boyle, and Templer had presumably pronounced.

The Cabinet's meeting of 27 July was affected by the way its chairman, Eden, handled the discussion. Eden opened the meeting by giving an account of his meeting with the French and American representatives the night before: 'he had told them that Her Majesty's Government would take a most serious view of this situation and that any failure on the part of the Western Powers to take the necessary steps to regain control over the Canal would have disastrous consequences for the economic life of the Western Powers and for their standing and influence in the Middle East'<sup>10</sup>. He thus presented the Cabinet with some sort of fait accompli: by 'informing' France and the United States of 'Her Majesty's Government's' view of the situation, he attached importance to the crisis and imposed a sense of urgency on Cabinet members. It should be emphasized, however, that he did not suggest the military option; the minutes read: 'The Cabinet should now consider what courses of action were open to us to safeguard our interests'.

What followed was a discussion of data on the economic importance of the Canal and of legal aspects of the problem; not until then did one discuss the factors related to the military option. Experts gave their view on each of these sides of the problem: Minister of Fuel and Power Jones (not a Cabinet member) had been invited to spell out some of the consequences of Egypt's move; the legal advisors of the Foreign Office had prepared a memo on considerations of international law; finally, and the Chiefs of Staff had been invited to discuss the military option.

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<sup>9</sup>(...continued)

<sup>10</sup> about 10.30 (PM) and met the King of Iraq just leaving (-). From then till 4 AM it was frantic. (-) It was badly organized, said Guy, with French and Americans listening while we discussed how and whether to take military action. All that emerged was a dullest statement for use in the House at 11 this morning', Clark 'Whitehall Diary', Bodleian Library, Oxford, p. 101, entry 26/27 July 1956. It seems thus more likely that Clark was not present at all and received his information from Guy Millard, Eden's Private Secretary.

<sup>9</sup> COS(56)73, DEFE 4/89, 27 July 1956.

<sup>10</sup> Quotes from the 27 July Cabinet meeting can be found in CAB 128/30, CM(56)54.

Eden intervened only afterwards by saying that 'against this background the Cabinet must decide what our policy must be'. He led the Cabinet into formulating its objective: the Canal should be placed under international control; next, he invited the Cabinet to face the fundamental question 'whether they were prepared in the last resort to pursue their objective by the threat or even the use of force, and whether they were ready, in default of assistance from the United States and France, to take military action alone'. The Cabinet agreed to this, taking into consideration that 'failure to hold the Suez Canal would lead inevitably to the loss one by one of all our interests and assets in the Middle East and, even if we had to act alone, we could not stop short of using force to protect our position if all other means of protecting it proved unavailing...'.<sup>11</sup>

These considerations reveal three important matters: first, British prestige in the area was perceived to be at stake rather than British lines of supply. Nationalization was thus considered a threat to long-term British interests in the Middle East. Second, Cabinet members sensed that the amount of time to respond was limited: failure to react to this slap in the face, would have a disastrous effect on British standing elsewhere. Third, the agreement in principle to the use of force, even without assistance from the United States and France, reveals the prevailing assumption that, in that event, no opposition from the United States was expected, but, at least, tacit support. Given the presence of threat perception, perceived time constraints, and the possibility of hostilities, the nationalization crisis thus fits the criteria of international crisis. It could be added that a sense of surprise must have added to the feeling that a major crisis had started: it seems almost certain that after the decision to withdraw the offer of a loan for the construction of the Aswan high dam, no one in the American<sup>12</sup> nor the British<sup>13</sup> Governments anticipated Egyptian retaliation in the form of the nationalization the Suez Canal Company<sup>13</sup>. An intelligence brief from the State Department on 'the political significance of

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Dougherty, 'The Aswan Dam in Perspective', p. 38.

<sup>12</sup> In their memoirs, Butler and Kilmuir explicitly deny such anticipation. Butler, The Art of the Possible, p. 186; Kilmuir, Political Adventure, p. 267.

<sup>13</sup> Nasser had nationalized the Suez Canal Company in response to the withdrawal of the Anglo-American offer to finance the construction of the Aswan High Dam, in cooperation with the World Bank. At the time, December 1955, the offer was seen as a means of keeping Egypt out of the Soviet Union's orbit. Doubts about their policy were evident during the Anglo-American talks in Washington late January and early February 1956: Egypt's apparent success in obtaining arms (from the East) and aid (from the West) had created problems with the other members of the Baghdad Pact. Eden and Lloyd stressed that their vital oil interests depended on the regimes in the area, that these were undermined by Egypt's policies. American protectionist lobbies were pressing the Senate not to agree to the Aswan loan, Dulles was getting impatient with Nasser's foreign policies towards Syria and Communist China. (continued...)

the High Aswan Dam in Egypt', sent to the British Foreign Office on the day Dulles told Egyptian Ambassador Hussein that the offer was off, did not mention any such move<sup>14</sup>.

The records of the official Cabinet Suez Canal Committee of the period preceding the nationalization do not show that such an act was expected, although at a very early stage, in April 1955, when Egypt was looking for possible creditors for the Aswan project, it was noted that 'rumours have been prevalent in Cairo that the Government might try to lay their hands on the resources on the reserves of the Company to help them to finance the building of the High Aswan Dam'. And still earlier, Eden had been warned that after the imminent British withdrawal from the Suez Base in 1954, the Suez Canal would be Egypt's next objective<sup>15</sup>.

#### 10.4 Indicators of independent variables

In the morning of 30 July the Chiefs of Staff told the members of the Egypt Committee that immediate military action would be risky because it could not be guaranteed that the troops who had to quickly occupy the Canal Zone would hold out until the arrival of reinforcements. At that same meeting the committee agreed to organize a conference of those maritime nations that had an important interest in the canal. To what extent can one say that the first decision, not to take immediate military action, but to arrange a diplomatic conference first, was affected by the four independent and constraining variables that have been distinguished?

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<sup>13</sup>(...continued)

In early May 1956 Dulles and Lloyd had privately agreed that the loan offer should 'wither on the line'. However, on 18 July 1956, following Egypt's recognition of Communist China, and in the context of Congressional opposition, the USA decided to formally withdraw the loan offer, which was communicated to Egyptian Ambassador Hussein the next day; Aronson, From Sideshow to Center Stage, pp. 154-182. This move was regretted by the British Government, that had agreed to withdrawing the offer some 5 days earlier, but had not expected such an abrupt announcement; Shuckburgh mentions in his diary that this decision had been taken within Whitehall around 20 June; Descent to Suez, p. 356, entry 20 June 1956.

<sup>14</sup> Actually, it was estimated that Egypt would remain neutral despite a Russian offer to construct the Dam; 'State Department Intelligence Brief No. 1969. "The Political Significance of the High Aswan Dam in Egypt"', 19 July 1956, FO 371/118853, Public Record Office, Kew.

<sup>15</sup> CAB 134/803, quote from CSC(55)3, 21 April 1955. In a meeting with Lord Hankey, member of the board of the Suez Canal Company, Hankey expressed his view 'that the Egyptian Government would sooner or later want to take over the Suez Canal. For that reason, [Hankey] deprecated the total withdrawal of British forces from the Canal Zone [-]. I [Eden]: explained to him the insuperable reasons to any such plan [] He repeated his fear that when British troops had left the zone, the Suez Canal would be the next Egyptian objective', Record of a conversation between Eden and Hankey, FO 800/775, Eg/54/37, 23 March 1954.

1. The operational code and directive leadership. Eden's cognitive belief system provides an important clue to understanding why the Cabinet decided to respond vigorously and immediately to Egypt's act of nationalization instead of adopting a more conciliatory policy first. After all, the Cabinet had recognized that from a narrow international legal point of view 'this amounted to no more than a decision to buy out the shareholders'. Why did British policymakers define the problem as an Egyptian threat to British interests throughout the Middle East? The minutes reflect considerations that can best be understood in terms of Eden's operational code: Egypt's recent behaviour gave no confidence that they would recognize their international obligations in respecting and running the Canal as an important international facility<sup>16</sup>. This suggests that Nasser had passed an important threshold within Eden's belief system: he could no longer be considered someone who respects the rules of international conduct based on the mutual recognition of respective national interests. In his memoirs, Eden writes that in the many messages he despatched that day he wrote that 'a man with Colonel Nasser's record could not be allowed "to have his thumb on our windpipe"'(emphasis mine)<sup>17</sup>. This is consistent with Eden's operational code<sup>18</sup>.

This interpretation is reinforced by Eden's directive leadership at the beginning of the Cabinet meeting of 27 July, when the definition of the problem was narrowed down. However, it would be wrong to conclude that he imposed his will on the Cabinet completely: after the initial presentation of the problem, he allowed for a relatively free discussion of the courses that were open to the Cabinet, after having asked for the opinions of three experts on economic, legal and military aspects of the problem<sup>19</sup>. As a matter of fact, three alternative courses of action were discussed: (1) to refer the matter to the United Nations' Security Council, (2) to take economic measures only against Egypt, (3) to put economic pressure on Egypt and at the same time threaten with the use of force. This means that at least one option was not even considered, that is, to do nothing, or just to issue a strong diplomatic protest. As noted above, Eden had made this impossible by opening the meeting with his statement that

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<sup>16</sup> Cab 128/30, CM(65)54, 27 July 1956.

<sup>17</sup> Eden, Full Circle, pp. 425-426.

<sup>18</sup> James comes close to this interpretation when he observes that '[] in Eden's eyes, what Nasser had done was a callous betrayal of his solemn pledges and agreements, which was despicable in itself, and he was clearly a man without integrity or reason', Anthony Eden, p. 457.

<sup>19</sup> Minister Jones of Fuel and Power on the economic importance of the Canal, a memorandum on the legal aspects of the matter, and an overview by the Chiefs of Staff of the military resources that would be required to quickly occupy the Canal.



failure to take the necessary steps to regain control of the Canal would ruin the Western powers' standing and prestige in the Middle East.

The first option considered, reference to the Security Council, was rejected by Eden during that first meeting. He thought it would risk a Soviet veto. This view is fully consistent with his operational code. Eden had grown extremely distrustful of the United Nations since 1948 (a turning point in his attitude towards the Soviet Union) and thought it had become wholly ineffective because of the recurring Soviet veto.

Later, at the afternoon Egypt Committee meeting of 30 July, Lord Home (Commonwealth Secretary) suggested taking the matter to the Security Council and trying to get Egypt charged with aggression, because it would, first, give more time to prepare other measures, and, second, prevent Great Britain from being labelled as aggressor<sup>20</sup>. This option was rejected for two reasons: for one thing, it was not considered in the British interest, but, in addition, a vote at the United Nations would put the Arab countries in a most difficult position as they would have to side with Egypt while they might secretly support the strong action being taken against Egypt. The records do not show who formulated these considerations (they are presented as 'Cabinet discussion'), but it seems that the operational code is not the only factor that can account for the attitude adopted towards the United Nations: narrow calculations of national interest and strategy seem to have been equally important.

It is thus difficult to indicate Eden's impact on decision making with precision. Nevertheless, it has been significant for the definition of the problem and for the consequent formulation of Great Britain objectives in this crisis: Mountbatten suggests that Eden was much more straightforward about the stakes than the official records reveal: apart from the restoration of international control of the Canal, Eden's 'object was to get rid of Colonel Nasser personally and his regime which he regarded as the principal enemies'<sup>21</sup>. There can be no doubt that the decision to establish a link between Great Britain's response and the downfall of the Egyptian Government, which the Egypt Committee explicitly formulated as its

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<sup>20</sup> Most interestingly, Home suggested that a UN intervention force be formed in order to deal with this international problem.

<sup>21</sup> ADM 205/117, 27 July 1956. It must be said that these are Mountbatten's words, and that they do not occur as such in the records of the EC's meeting of 27 July. If this counts as sufficient evidence of Eden's first reaction to Nasser's act of nationalization, then it seems to fit what Irving Janis labelled emotive decision rules: these serve to cope with emotional stress when a decisionmaker feels confronted with a threat to his self-esteem. Janis argues that two types of decision rules may enter the process: one 'the audacity rule', which opens the possibility of taking a risky course of action, secondly, the 'retaliation rule', in order to deal with anger; Janis, Crucial decisions, pp. 16-18, 191-198.

immediate objective<sup>22</sup>, was the origin of the principal dilemma which the British Government would be facing during the entire crisis: it would be very difficult to get rid of Nasser if one preferred not to say so explicitly, and to rather use the veil of international control of the Canal as a pretext for intervention: control of the Canal could be only obtained with support from the United States and public opinion. Neither of these, however, would support military action explicitly aimed at toppling Nasser. Therefore, the principal cognitive failure made by the British Government was the assumption that taking strong action regarding the Canal would automatically cause Nasser's downfall<sup>23</sup>. This assumption was indispensable, however, if a formal acknowledgement that the toppling of Nasser was the real objective, was ruled out.

It is curious, however, that the objective of Nasser's downfall was not mentioned during the Cabinet discussions on the day after the nationalization, but reoccurred at the Egypt Committee of 30 July, when it was concluded that 'while our ultimate purpose was to place the Canal under international control, our immediate objective was to bring about the downfall of the present Egyptian Government'<sup>24</sup>. It seems more likely<sup>25</sup> that Mountbatten's account of Eden's objectives refers to the informal meeting in the evening of 26 July at which he had been present<sup>26</sup>. If this picture is correct, it puts a heavy burden on Eden who led the Cabinet into accepting the use of force in principle without full discussion over the question whether its objective should include the downfall of Nasser. Of course, the genesis of the Egypt Committee might point to Eden's preference to withhold certain objectives from the Cabinet. The installation of such an *ad hoc* body was rather unusual. Butler afterwards declared that it

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<sup>22</sup> CAB 128/1216, EC(56)3, 30 July 1956.

<sup>23</sup> The records of the third EC meeting on 30 July 1956 reveals the perception of this dilemma very clearly: 'This [downfall Nasser] might perhaps be achieved by less elaborate operations than those required to secure physical possession of the Canal itself [e.g., air raids on Alexandria and Cairo]. On the other hand, it was argued that our case before world opinion was based on the need to secure international control over the Canal', EC(56)3, 30 July 1956.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*.

<sup>25</sup> This conclusion is based on two considerations: (1) as a rule, the Chiefs of Staff would be seen into the Cabinet Room when military planning was the subject of discussion, (2) on 27 July the Cabinet discussed military requirements for the occupation and running of the Canal in the light of Egyptian military strength rather than an attempt to topple Nasser. Therefore, Mountbatten has not been present at the beginning of the Cabinet meeting, when the definition of the problem and the objectives were discussed.

<sup>26</sup> Chauvel, the French *Chargé d'affaires*, who had been present, reports in his memoirs that night 'all the members of the British Government want decisive action, but don't see clearly how to take it'. Vaisse notes that Chauvel says nothing of the sort in his official account in his telegram to the *Quai d'Orsay*; Maurice Vaisse, 'France and the Suez Crisis', in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956. The Crisis and its Consequences*, p. 139, footnote 50.

was Eden's personal wish to have a small committee of trusted collaborators<sup>27</sup> around him in order to avoid opposition from the full Cabinet<sup>28</sup>.

If one accepts Mountbatten's account as a correct record of the informal meeting of 26 July, then Eden can be said to have directed the Cabinet towards the use of force without clear objective for such action, leaving the formulation of military and political objectives to the Egypt Committee, originally intended as a very small group indeed. However, if one accepts Mountbatten's account as a reflection of the Cabinet's first meeting during the crisis, as he claims himself, then it must be concluded that the Cabinet unanimously accepted the toppling of Nasser as the immediate objective of the whole enterprise. Even if criticism against such objective did emerge (the records cannot tell us), it must have been rather clear, given Eden's personal statements of goals (as recorded by Mountbatten), that in deciding in favour of an extremely small decision making body to deal with the situation, all Cabinet members knew perfectly well into which direction such planning would go.

2. Groupthink. One is struck by the extent of unanimity that arises from the records of the meetings related to decision 1. Discussions neither at the Cabinet nor at the Egypt Committee show much dissension on the aims that were formulated or the methods that should be employed, including the possible use of force. Even later critics, such as Monckton and Butler<sup>29</sup>, raised no objection. Moreover, every policy maker appeared to agree to the essential consideration that failure to hold the Canal would inevitably lead to the loss of all British interests in the Middle East.

Both Cabinet and Egypt Committee formulated some interesting assumptions about the Egyptian attitude: first, Egypt was considered incapable of running the Canal by itself; second, it was 'evident that Egypt would not yield to economic pressure alone'. It was thus essential to concert diplomatic pressure on Egypt with France and the United States<sup>30</sup>. Neither the

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<sup>27</sup> The original members included Eden, Lloyd, Macmillan, Salisbury, Monckton, and Home.

<sup>28</sup> Butler, 'Reflections on Cabinet Government', p. 202; One reason not to give full credit to Butler's story is the fact that he was ill during the first days of the crisis. He was not present at either the first Cabinet or at the first and second meeting of the Egypt Committee. His account of Eden's personal interests in the EC must therefore have been based on hearsay. Butler's account should be handled with care; in his memoirs he dates his entry into the EC to 2 August 1956. The records show, however, that Butler was present at the EC meetings from 30 July. Butler may simply have been mistaken, but it appears that he agreed to the EC's decision of 30 July that the toppling of Nasser was the first objective of the British Government.

<sup>29</sup> It is only fair to Butler to stress that he was absent until 30 July.

<sup>30</sup> CM(56)54, CAB 128/30, 27 July 1956.

Cabinet nor the Egypt Committee felt like verifying whether Egypt might be brought on her knees by economic pressure alone, and whether the Egyptians would be capable of running the Canal without help from the Company's pilots. Failure to examine the latter question especially would prove a fundamental mistake later in September when the British and French Government thought they could bring matters to a head by having the Company recall its pilots<sup>31</sup>.

When eventually the Egypt Committee accepted the idea of a users' conference in the morning of 30 July 1956, after it had become clear that no immediate military action would be possible, the Committee engaged in some dangerous wishful thinking: the users' conference was to re-establish international control of the Suez Canal. 'If Colonel Nasser failed to accept it, military operations could then proceed'<sup>32</sup>. No-one thought of the possibility that the outcome of the Conference might be ambiguous, instead of a clear acceptance or rejection of Western demands by Nasser. This development would once again catch British decisionmakers by surprise, the second time in a fortnight.

Dissension focused on possible recourse to the United Nations. On 30 July Home argued that Egypt should be condemned as an aggressor before the Security Council in order to anticipate Egypt or the Soviet Union trying the same tactic against the United Kingdom. The other EC members considered such a move detrimental to British interests and feared it would bring Arab countries into a most difficult position because a resolution would force them to take a public stand. At the full Cabinet on 1 August the issue of the United Nations was brought up again. Lloyd stressed that the United States in particular had been against recourse to the United Nations, because the Americans feared that discussion at the UNO about the Suez Canal might have implications for the status of the Panama Canal which they regarded as American property rather than an international entity, such as the Suez Canal Company. Rather than a UN-sponsored conference, they preferred a Conference of signatories to the original 1888 Convention of Constantinople, which had established the Suez Canal as an international waterway.

This raises the question of the importance of a 'third level of decision making' which comprised neither the Cabinet nor the Egypt Committee, but the level of a small group of individual Ministers. Only a restricted number of British policymakers met with the American envoy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Murphy and, after his arrival on 1 August, Dulles:

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 17.

<sup>32</sup> EC(56)3, CAB 128/1216, 30 July 1956.

Eden, Lloyd, Salisbury, and Macmillan<sup>33</sup>. This meant, first of all, that British perceptions of the American attitude towards the dispute was based on the interpretation of a small number of individuals; second, that both the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet were dependent on these four individuals in making an assessment of the American position.

In a meeting at the Foreign Office on 27 July the American Charge d'Affaires Foster<sup>34</sup> had made it clear to Lloyd and the French Ambassador Chauvel that American understanding of the British and French position did not mean giving them carte blanche to engage in military adventures<sup>35</sup>. Even more alarming was the next day's message from Roger Makins, British Ambassador in Washington, that the Americans did not want to be entangled into that conflict. He suggested therefore to leave a big impression with Murphy that France and Great Britain took the matter very seriously<sup>36</sup>. It must therefore have been deliberate policy of Eden, Lloyd and Macmillan to 'mislead' Murphy as to the immediate use of military action<sup>37</sup>.

In an attempt to coordinate French and British policies, Lloyd told Pineau on 29 July, 15 minutes before they were to meet with Murphy for the first time, that the United States was very reluctant to talk about military force. It would therefore be better to discuss restoring international control of the Canal 'to fill the gap until we were prepared militarily'<sup>38</sup>. During their meeting with Murphy, Lloyd talked of the threat to Great Britain's vital interests, and Pineau stressed Nasser's influence on North African politics, comparing him with Hitler. Murphy answered that attention would have to be paid to world opinion, adding that American public opinion was 'not yet prepared'<sup>39</sup>. The French were clearly afraid that Murphy had

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<sup>33</sup> One should distinguish between, firstly, the formal tripartite talks between Lloyd, Pineau, and Murphy (and later Dulles), secondly, formal bilateral talks between Great Britain and the United States and between Great Britain and France (The United States and the French did not meet bilaterally), and thirdly, the informal lunches and dinners between American and British policymakers. The latter included Eden, Macmillan, and Salisbury as participants.

<sup>34</sup> Ambassador Winthrop Aldrich had coincidentally left for Washington on 26 July 1956; Winthrop Aldrich, 'The Suez Crisis. A Footnote to History', Foreign Affairs, April 1967, pp. 541-542.

<sup>35</sup> PREM 11/1098.

<sup>36</sup> PREM 11/1098.

<sup>37</sup> Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis, pp. 39-40.

<sup>38</sup> PREM, 11/1098.

<sup>39</sup> PREM 11/1098; Murphy claims that he 'asked a few questions and mostly [] just listened'; Robert Murphy, Diplomat among Warriors, Doubleday and Company, Garden City, 1964, p. 379; apparently (continued...)

come to London only to delay the adoption of drastic measures. The French Ambassador told Lloyd on 29 July that his Government was afraid that the Americans would take the same position as they had over the Abadan-crisis<sup>40</sup>.

On 30 July Eden, Salisbury, Lloyd and Macmillan had lunch with Murphy. That evening Murphy dined with Macmillan, Foster, and Lord Alexander at 11, Downing Street. On both occasions British ministers tried to convince Murphy that Great Britain meant business. Macmillan made his famous remark that Britain could not become a second Netherlands<sup>41</sup>. Murphy's account of these conversations to Eisenhower prompted the American President to send Secretary of State Dulles to London<sup>42</sup>. By that time, however, Lloyd and Eden had already concluded in a private discussion about the talks with Murphy, that in case the United States would not join in with military action, 'we should rely upon them to "watch the bear"' and to make sure that the United States 'should use all their influence to keep the Israelis out of it'. Lloyd and Eden took account of another message from Makins who had reported that Dulles had sent for him, and had told him that he saw no basis for U.S. military force, partly because it would need the approval of Congress, which was by no means a certainty<sup>43</sup>. Again, British policymakers assumed that an American refusal to actively participate in military action, still implied tacit approval of, and support for, such a policy.

When Dulles arrived on 1 August, he carried a letter from Eisenhower, in which the President stressed the exploration of diplomatic solutions. In his letter to Eden of 28 July, he had already suggested a conference of those maritime nations that were affected most by Nasser's move<sup>44</sup>. Dulles had recognized that Eisenhower's phrasing was rather ambiguous and handed over another letter of his own, explaining that Eisenhower's text 'refers not to the going through the motions of having an intermediate conference, but to the use of intermediate

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<sup>39</sup>(...continued)

he did more than that and may have given hope to Lloyd and Pineau by saying that American public opinion was not yet ready (my emphasis).

<sup>40</sup> PREM 11/1098. That is, delaying tactics in order to prevent military action, by suggesting that a diplomatic solution is possible, eventually leading to an agreement (as to Abadan regarding exploiting oil resources) that benefitted the Americans but weakened the British sphere of influence.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy, *Diplomat among Warriors*, p. 380; Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 105.

<sup>42</sup> Murphy, *ibid.*, p. 381.

<sup>43</sup> PREM 11/1098, Makins to Foreign Office, 30 July 1956. Makins warned that 'Mr. Dulles's attitude confirms the pessimistic impression []. In prevailing conditions, we can look for little help from Washington'.

<sup>44</sup> James, *Anthony Eden*, p. 463.

steps as a genuine and sincere effort to settle the problem and avoid the use of force'<sup>45</sup>. On 1 August Harold Caccia reported to Eden a meeting between him and Dulles at the Foreign Office that morning. Caccia told of Dulles's words that the aims of the United States and the United Kingdom were the same, but that 'if the attempt were to be made by force alone, he saw great difficulties'<sup>46</sup>. The one word alone may have left enough room for Eden not to take Dulles's correction of Eisenhower's letter too seriously, and to conclude: 'The President did not rule out the use of force'<sup>47</sup>. Lloyd's conversation with Dulles and Murphy at noon that day left the Foreign Secretary with the same impression even though he truthfully reported that Dulles suspected the British Government was not taking diplomatic steps seriously<sup>48</sup>. In general, Lloyd displayed a rather bellicose attitude in these early days. He privately told Pineau on 31 July that it would be wise for France and Great Britain to go forward together: 'the Americans often followed where others took action. It was important not to get held up in discussions longer than suited us militarily'<sup>49</sup>.

Concluding remarks on the importance of the small group variable. Two main conclusions can be drawn regarding the possible influence of small group factors. Firstly, both Cabinet and Egypt Committee acted rather unanimously in their assessment of the problem, the objectives to be pursued and the means to be employed. The consequence was that many assumptions on which their decision making was based were not discussed. Secondly, contacts with the United States and France were maintained by a small group of four policymakers, two of which, Macmillan (Chancellor of the Exchequer) and Salisbury (Lord President of the Council) did not formally belong to the foreign policy making system. This is be a clear indicator of the presence of a coherent smaller inner circle.

In their dealing with the Americans it can safely be concluded that Eden, Macmillan, Lloyd, and Salisbury acted on the assumption that it would be possible to cajole the United States into a policy that would best benefit the United Kingdom. In doing so, they applied a technique that had been practiced regarding the concluding of the Suez Canal treaty, the

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<sup>45</sup> PREM 11/1098, 31 July 1956.

<sup>46</sup> PREM 11/1098, 1 August 1956.

<sup>47</sup> Eden, Full Circle, p. 436.

<sup>48</sup> PREM 11/1098, 1 August 1956, conversation between Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Murphy, and Mr. Dulles.

<sup>49</sup> PREM 11/1098, 31 July 1956. That morning Lloyd had been very tough at a meeting with Conservative backbenchers: 'Apparently he almost declared war and got a great hand for doing so'; Clarke, 'Whitehall Diary', entry 31 July 1956, p. 103.

Persian oil crisis, and, most recently, after Nasser's Czech arms deal and the Glubb affair<sup>30</sup>. This approach had two important consequences. First, British policy makers did not conceive of the possibility that American reluctance to support military action might actually signal their opposition to it<sup>31</sup>. Lloyd and Eden thought the Americans would rather not join in military action, but would no doubt cover British and French manoeuvres. Second, by consequence, British policymakers went to great lengths to make sure that their interpretation of messages from Dulles and Eisenhower fitted their own assumptions regarding the American attitude.

Did this added level of four policymakers impede decision making at the level of the Cabinet or Egypt Committee? In the Egypt Committee Eden was fair about the conversations with Murphy. He told the Committee that Murphy had come only to hear what the trouble was all about. Eden told them that he had said to Murphy that he hoped that the Americans would keep a watchful eye on the Soviet Union and would restrain Israel<sup>32</sup>. It is much more doubtful whether Selwyn Lloyd was correct in telling the Cabinet on 1 August, when the Government was to accept the proposal for the London Conference, that the United States and the United Kingdom were thinking along the same lines: both wanted to make Nasser 'disgorge'<sup>33</sup> what he had swallowed, Lloyd said<sup>34</sup>. According to Clark, 'Selwyn reported that Dulles would give full support to our tough attitude if we only agreed that Russia should be invited to the conference'<sup>35</sup>. Lloyd added, however, that Dulles had made it clear that the Americans would 'strongly deprecate "any premature use of force"'<sup>36</sup>. Obviously then, no member of the

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Appendix 2.

<sup>31</sup> This was, of course, grounded in Eden's and Lloyd's conviction that by cancelling the Aswan loan, the Americans had accepted the British idea that Nasser should no longer be appeased. This is confirmed in Lloyd's remark to French Ambassador Chauvel on 26 July 1956, a few hours before Nasser would nationalize the Canal Company: 'the Americans had made up their minds that it was time to deal firmly with Nasser, but had not given further consideration to methods [] The prospect was that relations with Nasser would wither away', FO 800/738.

<sup>32</sup> EC(56)4, CAB 128/1216, 30 July 1956.

<sup>33</sup> The term was first used by Dulles when he met Eden on 1 August 1956. During the crisis British decision makers often referred to this expression in order to prove that Dulles and they wanted the same thing.

<sup>34</sup> CM(56)56, CAB 128/30, 1 August 1956.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 1 August 1956, p. 104.

<sup>36</sup> CAB 128/30, CM(56)56, 1 August 1956. Cf. Richard Lamb, The Failure of the Eden Government, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1987, p. 202.



Cabinet wondered whether the United States' attitude implied complete opposition to the use of force.

It is difficult to distinguish all symptoms of groupthink, either at the level of the Cabinet, or Egypt Committee, or the small group that was in contact with Murphy and Dulles. One could say that the Cabinet's decision on 27 July to be prepared to go it alone eventually, testifies to an **illusion of invulnerability**. Possibly one could consider the decision not to go to the United Nations to be of that category as well. Neff reports that on that same day Cabinet members felt as if they had taken a weighty decision, one of great righteousness. Unfortunately, no primary or secondary source is given<sup>57</sup>. If correct, this would indicate a **belief in the inherent morality of the group**. To a certain extent, the original exclusion of Butler from the Egypt Committee, and from the group of four that spoke to the Americans, might qualify as a **self-appointed mindguard**. The evidence is rather poor, however. Moreover, efforts to rationalize collectively (e.g., about the American attitude) are not linked to this decisional conflict in particular, but seem the recurrence of habitual tactics the British had adopted towards the United States. They thus testify of the influence of what has been called the attitudinal prism British foreign policymakers had developed towards the United States.

3. The organizational context. The main reason why the British Government was unable to send a military force forthwith was the unpreparedness of the British Armed Forces for the contingency of a limited war such as an operation against Egypt was likely to be. Great Britain was well enough equipped to fight a major war in Europe, including a nuclear conflict, as well as a guerilla-war, as on Cyprus and Malaya. This constraint obviously conditioned British decision making to a large extent. As shown above, Mountbatten told the Chiefs of Staff that in the night of 26 July Ministers had already decided not to take any action 'which could be construed as threatening Egypt' until the views of other interested powers had been obtained. What is not clear is whether the state of unreadiness induced the Ministers to embark on consultations first, or whether they had deemed consultations the proper move anyway. In any case, the Cabinet of 27 July must have been under no illusion regarding the immediate use

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<sup>57</sup> Donald Neff, Warriors at Suez. Eisenhower takes the United States into the Middle East, 1981, p. 282.

of force: the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that military supplies would take weeks to arrive by sea. Preparations would thus take several weeks<sup>58</sup>.

The military plans, presented to the Cabinet by the Chiefs of Staff on 1 August under the title 'Action against Egypt', stressed the unreadiness of notably the paratroopers who lacked adequate parachute training, because they had been fighting against Cypriot guerillas since the Summer of 1955<sup>59</sup>. Any swift airborne occupation of (part of) the Canal therefore seemed unlikely<sup>60</sup>. Much more important, however, was the military's belief that airborne troops should be reinforced within a reasonable time. Even though it might be possible, with French support, to move an armoured division to the Canal area, it would take too long to have them relieved by the main task force, which would have to sail from Malta, which was the closest harbour for landingcraft. It has been said that this cautious approach was caused by the trauma left by the battle of Arnhem in 1944, when ground troops had been too slow to relieve the airborne troops. The Chiefs of Staff allegedly reminded Eden of Arnhem<sup>61</sup>.

It thus seems clear that the decision making process was strongly affected by the conditions of military preparations. It could be said that on the one hand British military forces were caught by surprise by the nature of task assigned to them, being prepared only for nuclear or guerilla warfare, so that they would have to engage in traditional, meticulous, planning, as for the Normandy invasion in 1944. In that effort they relied on standard operation procedures. This is recognized by Eden, who recalls 'constantly urging' on the military that planning against Egyptians was not as difficult as planning against Germans<sup>62</sup>.

This interpretation may be correct, but should be qualified. For one thing, contingency planning did include operations against Egypt. Since 23 April 1956 British and American Joint Chiefs of Staff had been engaged in preparing contingencies to act against aggression in a war between Israel and Arab countries. On 13 April 1956, in preparing themselves for these talks, the British Chiefs of Staff had come up with four situations that might arise. One possibility

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<sup>58</sup> CM(56)54, CAB 128/30, 27 July 1956. Macmillan thought it would take at least 6 weeks. The chief problem therefore was 'how to fill up the time before our striking force can be got ready', Macmillan diary entry 30 and 31 July 1956, quoted by Alistair Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956. Volume 1 of the Official Biography, Macmillan, London, 1988, p. 398.

<sup>59</sup> Lamb, The failure of the Eden Government, pp. 134 ff.

<sup>60</sup> AIR 8/1948, JS(56)135 (final), 1 August 1956.

<sup>61</sup> Lamb, The Failure of the Eden Government, pp. 198-199; Thomas, The Suez Affair, p. 51: Thomas speaks of a military taboo that existed since Arnhem 1944.

<sup>62</sup> Eden, Full Circle, p. 430.

was an attack of Israel on Egypt, another was an Egyptian attack on Israel; a third, a situation in which the aggressor would not be evident, and fourth, a limited military action to safeguard nationals and vital interests, notably the Canal base. Apart from plans to install a maritime blockade, combined with air operations and possibly land operations, a worst case scenario was developed that was aimed at keeping open the Suez Canal by dropping paratroopers, followed by a swift build-up of air transported forces in order to secure the airfield, to occupy Suez, and to seize bridges and ferries across the Canal. Port Said was a deep water port that could be used for the arrival of reinforcements<sup>63</sup>.

Interestingly, Mountbatten asked for guidance on political objectives, because British involvement in an Arab-Israeli conflict could have consequences for British relations with the Arab world. He thought it wise, however, to have these joint planning sessions on the assumption that the protection of oil interests would be the ultimate purpose of the planning<sup>64</sup>. The Chiefs' report of the joint planning talks with the Americans in Washington between 25 April and 3 May clearly shows that one thought the seizure of the Canal Zone by employing paratroopers and launching a naval assault was thought to be possible. The main objectives of such operations should be Port Said, Suez, and the area of the Suez Canal base, where the British, under the Egyptian-British 1954 Treaty, still kept stored supplies for 80,000 soldiers. British and Americans did not differ in their assessment of plans and requirements, only regarding the command structure of such an operation<sup>65</sup>.

These data suggest that contingency planning for other wars than those on a world wide or local scale did take place. Even the employment of paratroopers for an action against the Suez Canal had been contemplated<sup>66</sup>. The Chiefs of Staff expressed their preference for a maritime blockade, possibly combined with air operations. This preference was based on the objective of minimizing the alienation of Arab allies, who might think that seizure of the Canal would amount to British support of Israel<sup>67</sup>. No reference is made to the unpreparedness of

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<sup>63</sup> JP(56)70 (Final) 13 April 1956, DEFE 6/35

<sup>64</sup> COS(56)44, DEFE 4/86, 25 April 1956.

<sup>65</sup> COS(56)187, DEFE 4/86, 9 May 1956.

<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the Chiefs of Staff, in their first meeting on 27 July 1956 at 9.15 A.M., concluded that 'although there was a plan in being for operating the Suez Canal in emergency, no plan existed for taking over control of the Canal in the face of Egyptian opposition'; COS(56)73, DEFE 4/73, 27 July 1956. Technically, this is true: Anglo-American planning dealt with an Arab-Israeli conflict, not with a limited war against Egypt.

<sup>67</sup> DEFE 6/35, JP(56)70 (final), 13 April 1956.

paratroopers, nor to problems regarding the amount of time that would be needed to relieve the airborne troops<sup>68</sup>.

It should nevertheless be concluded that British policymakers were constrained by the range of options presented by the Chiefs of Staff.

### 10.5 Conclusions

An explanation of the British decision to accept a diplomatic conference instead of immediate military action must take account of the following: although the proposition for a conference of the principal users of the Suez Canal was adopted by the Cabinet on the evening of 1 August, the discussion preceding this decision was not about the principle of such a diplomatic move, but about the participants of this conference. The decision to hold a users' conference had effectively already been taken by the Egypt Committee in the morning of 30 July. This decision, however, was the outcome of deliberations of a small group of Ministers (Eden, Lloyd, Salisbury, Home, and Kilmuir) not to take drastic action before the view of other interested powers (presumably the United States and France) had been known.

Two elements seemed to have principally affected the British decision: first, the consideration that at least American tacit consent was needed before starting any military action. This meant that the opinion of the main American foreign policy makers (Murphy, Dulles, and Eisenhower) had to be convinced of the seriousness of the situation. Second, the presumed unpreparedness of British military forces. Eventually, this meant that a conference became indispensable in order to keep up the pressure while military plans were being worked out. Military unreadiness actually caused a domestic problem for the Government, because public opinion in Great Britain might accuse the Government of inactivity. This explains the hurry with which troops were sent to Tobruk in Cyrenaica on 31 July and why 20,000 reservists had been urgently recalled forthwith on 28 July<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>68</sup> None of these aspects appear in Cohen's analysis of British contingency plans to attack Israel; Stuart A. Cohen, 'A Still Stranger Aspect of Suez: British Operational Plans to Attack Israel', *The International History Review*, (10), 2, 1988, pp. 261-281. If my interpretation of data is correct, then (a) either the Chiefs of Staff had not been careful enough in their contingency planning and had overlooked the practical difficulties of lifting and reinforcing an airborne force, or (b) the Chiefs of Staff did not know about these practical circumstances, and found out about them only on 26 and 27 July, or (c) the Chiefs of Staff preferred to play down the possibility of a *coup de main* in the Canal area. Which interpretation is correct does not matter as long as the policymakers believed that the unpreparedness of British troops made an immediate attack impossible.

<sup>69</sup> These domestic considerations were explicitly made. The decision to recall 20,000 reservists was even made while risking that Egypt or the Soviet Union might address this question to the Security Council; EC(56)2, 28 July 1956; EC(56)6, 31 July 1956, ADM 116/6097.

Thus, it appears that the **organizational context** has been relevant in setting the time frame within which British decision makers had to operate. The **group factor** seems to have been most relevant in that the crucial meeting of 26 July was attended by only a small group of ministers and that contact with the representatives of the United States and France was entrusted to almost the same small group<sup>70</sup>. Moreover, apart from the issue of going to the United Nations, both the Cabinet and the Egypt Committee were unanimous in their analysis of the stakes, objectives, and options available. Their unanimity prevented them from questioning several important assumptions that they employed in their deliberations. Nevertheless, only a few symptoms of groupthink could be found. It was shown, moreover, that part of the decision making process, at least during the important first full Cabinet meeting on 27 July, should be explained by the way the group's leader, that is, the Prime Minister, dealt with the situation. In that sense, **directive leadership** has been of some relevance. Furthermore, it was argued that Eden's **operational code** partly explains the sense of crisis that occurred after Nasser's move (contrary to earlier Egyptian acts against British interests) as well as the attitude that was adopted towards the possibility of referring the dispute to the Security Council.

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<sup>70</sup> It should be recalled that Macmillan had not been present on 26 July, but became member of this inner group, while Kilmuir, who had been present on 26 July would not re-enter the inner group until early September.

## Chapter 11: Decision 2: the Menzies mission

### 10.1 The dilemma

The Cabinet had thus accepted that a conference would be held in London, expecting that the outcome would amount to either Nasser 'disgorging' the Canal or obtaining permission to restore the international character of the Canal by force. Evidently, it did not anticipate a more ambiguous outcome of the London conference, which was to open on 16 August. Eighteen of the 22 countries present<sup>1</sup> supported a proposal which reflected Dulles's strong opening speech at the Conference in which he asked for international control of the Canal<sup>2</sup>. Towards the end of the Conference it became clear that Dulles did not want to travel to Egypt to present the so-called Eighteen-Powers Proposals to Nasser. Great Britain and France had thought this the best way to, first, reinforce the commitment of the United States to their case and, second, confront Nasser with something which looked like an ultimatum. Towards the end of the Conference, therefore, British policymakers suddenly became aware of the possibility that, unless a strong delegation was sent, Nasser might procrastinate for a little while, making it impossible to Great Britain and France to take stronger action. The solution to this dilemma, temporary, as it would prove, was found in the early morning of 22 August, when the Australian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, agreed to head the delegation to Cairo.

British policymakers' growing apprehension that the London Conference would have an unfortunate ending is best expressed in Lord Salisbury's letter to Eden on 9 August. Salisbury suggested that the Conference might have many different endings than acceptance or refusal by Nasser of proposals regarding the internationalization of the Canal:

'There are an infinite number of gradations in between. For instance, the conference may break up without agreement. Or Colonel Nasser may not entirely turn down some proposal that is put to him, but may make suggestions that go some way to meet us, but not nearly enough [] for it would be claimed

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<sup>1</sup> Present at the Conference were the Parties to the Convention of 1888: France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, Soviet Union; and other nations that had a strong interest in traffic through the Canal: Australia, Ceylon, Denmark, Ethiopia, Western Germany, Greece, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Sweden and the United States. Egypt had been invited, but had refused the invitation. All states, except for India, the Soviet Union, Ceylon and Indonesia, did agree to the proposal based on Dulles's speech.

<sup>2</sup> This idea was not really liked by Eisenhower. He preferred India's Foreign Secretary Krishna Menon's proposal, which envisaged the installation of an advisory council to the Egyptian Government rather than create a formally international body to run the Canal. Of course, Dulles could not change his opening speech, and convinced Eisenhower that Menon's proposal clearly was a concession to Nasser that Great Britain and France would never accept; James, Anthony Eden, pp. 501-502.

by Colonel Nasser as a success, and we cannot afford that he should have a success [].' [Contingency planning was thus] 'the more necessary as we shall we have, if we are to proceed to force, to try to carry the bulk of our own public opinion with us, and at present I doubt whether we have more than half the country behind us; and the official Labour Party are steadily sliding away. This may well entail further intensive propaganda during the next few days as to the issues involved and the danger of weakness []. Finally, there is the position with regard to Parliament'[] If we are likely to have unhappily to proceed to extremes [i.e., use of force], a debate in Parliament is going to put us in an almost impossible position' [] This is, as I see it, an entirely new position, at any rate so far as recent times are concerned,' [in which] 'we should certainly not want to disclose our intentions or our plans'<sup>3</sup>.

Salisbury's letter illustrates two increasingly pressing developments confronting British policymakers: first, the decrease in public support for a tough policy towards Egypt, and, secondly, the possibility of an equivocal outcome of the Conference. This dilemma would eventually lead a small group of Ministers to conclude that some provocative action by Nasser would be needed, if force were to be justified. This conclusion was furthered by a third factor which after 10 August constrained the decision making process: on that day the Chiefs of Staff suggested that the invasion should not be located at Port Said, but rather at Alexandria, thus making it seem much less a response to the nationalization of the Canal company, and taking the risk of a larger number of civilian casualties. This plan of attack was therefore less easily justifiable under international law, and added to the sense of facing a dilemma.

### 11.2 The structure of decision making

Chart 2 presents the structure of the decision making process relating to decision 2. It should be recalled that the London conference opened on 16 August and ended on 23 August. Menzies accepts his assignment on 22 August at 2 A.M..

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**Chart 11.2: decision making structure of decision 2**

02 Aug	10 AM	Cabinet
	?	Eden meets Gaitskell
	6 PM	Egypt Committee (EC)

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<sup>3</sup> PREM 11/1099, Salisbury to Eden, 9 August 1956.

03 Aug	10 AM	Defence (Transition) Committee
	11 AM	Cabinet
	noon	EC
	x	Exchange of letters between Eden and Gaitskell
05 Aug		Macmillan dines with Churchill
06 Aug		Churchill meets Eden at Chequers
07 Aug	noon	D(T)C
	3 PM	Ministerial meeting
	3.15 PM	EC
09 Aug	11.15 AM	EC
	10.00 PM	EC
10 Aug	10.30 AM	EC
	03.30 PM	D(T)C
11 Aug	?	Staff Conference: Chiefs of Staff; Anthony Head, Eden, Monckton
14 Aug	10.00 AM	D(T)C
	10.45 AM	Lloyd/Eden/Salisbury meet Labour delegation
	05.15 PM	EC
16 Aug	11.45 AM	EC
17 Aug	10.00 AM	D(T)C
	11.00 AM	EC
19 Aug	??	Macmillan and Salisbury meet Aldrich at Hatfield
20 Aug	11.30 AM	EC
21 Aug	10.00 AM	D(T)C
	11.15 AM	Ministerial meeting
	noon	Cabinet
22 Aug	02.30 AM	Eden, Dulles, and Lloyd meet Menzies

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A glance at chart 11.2 allows three conclusions to be made regarding the structure of decision making: first, decision making is dominated by the Egypt Committee; second, two informal meetings senior ministers take place, one of which at a rather crucial moment: shortly before the important Cabinet meeting of 21 August, at which the official British attitude



towards the development of the London conference had to be determined; third, further evidence exists of a restricted number of ministers, Eden, Macmillan, Salisbury and Lloyd, who meet informally with representatives of the United States (Aldrich, Dulles) during the conference. Furthermore, some these ministers (Eden, Lloyd, Salisbury) keep in touch with the opposition. It thus seems that both Cabinet and Egypt Committee depended on a restricted number of ministers for their information on the attitude of both the United States Government and the Labour Party.

### 11.3 Constraints on decision making before the conference's start

As the day of the Conference's start approached, three factors made British decision makers realize that military action might not yet be possible in the event of Egypt's rejection of the conference's outcome: domestic opposition to the use of force was growing, Nasser might not give equivocally accept or reject the conference's outcome, and the military came with a change of plan.

1. Domestic public opinion. In the Commons debate of 2 August, the Labour Party had vigorously denounced Nasser's act of nationalization. Indeed, some commentators on Suez note that Labour leader Gaitskell made a more aggressive speech than Eden<sup>4</sup>. Gaitskell met Eden that same day, in order to find out about the Government's intentions regarding the use of force. Next day he wrote a letter to Eden in which he emphasized that the majority of his Party would not agree to force unless it was in line with the United Nations Charter. Eden's reply did not entail specific assurances about the use of force, upon which Gaitskell instantly sent another letter to Eden, repeating his party's reservations<sup>5</sup>. Further erosion of whatever Labour support of a tough line occurred when Eden, Salisbury, and Lloyd met with a Labour delegation, headed by Gaitskell, on 14 August. Gaitskell again stressed Labour's opposition to the use of force. This was reported by Eden at the Cabinet meeting which opened immediately after this meeting, but Eden significantly added that the Labour party delegates 'recognized that if any new incidents occurred, such as the interference with ships using the Canal, a new situation would arise in which force might be justified'<sup>6</sup>.

British policymakers also had to take account of international public opinion. On 7 August the Egypt Committee, discussing Lloyd's draft instructions to the British Ambassador

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<sup>4</sup> E.g., James, Anthony Eden, pp. 455-456.

<sup>5</sup> James, ibid., pp. 492-493.

<sup>6</sup> CM(56)59, 14 August 1956, PREM 11/1099.

to France, Sir Gladwyn Jebb, discussed the possibility of both Nasser's downfall and the occupation of entire Egypt as a possible outcome of strong action. Nevertheless, it was considered most important, 'from the point of public opinion, especially in the United States and in Asia, that the purpose of our action should appear to be confined to establishing the security of the international waterway across the isthmus of Suez, and not as being complicated by political designs against the Egyptian regime. It follows that the leakage of a document appearing to define our objective in wider terms could be disastrous'. Therefore, and in order not to alienate pro-Western Arab states, Israel should be restrained<sup>7</sup>, and France should moderate her attitude towards the Algerian situation, which had made her unpopular with Arab states<sup>8</sup>.

The Egypt Committee was very anxious not to appear too bellicose, while a diplomatic conference was at hand. Any significant military measures were therefore to be played down, much to the annoyance of the French who, because of domestic concerns opposite to those of the British Government, wanted to give as much publicity as possible to any sign of vigour<sup>9</sup>.

It does not come as a surprise therefore that the first two weeks of August witnessed an increased effort to impress domestic and international public opinion with the brutality of Nasser's act and of the strength of the Anglo-French case under international law. On 8 August Eden went on television to make a speech in which he compared Nasser with dictators from the Thirties. This broadcast was meant to be heard in the United States as well<sup>10</sup>. On 13 August the Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, arriving for the London Conference, also broadcast, at Eden's request, a condemnation of Nasser's action under international law; he was followed next day by Lloyd who did the same<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> This discussion was provoked by Macmillan's idea to somehow involve Israel in the military plans. Israel's "making noise" should tie Egyptian forces in the Sinai, thus easing the Anglo-French attack.

<sup>8</sup> EC(56)10, PREM 11/1099, 7 August 1956.

<sup>9</sup> An example from this period comes from the planned visit of British military commanders to Paris in early August. The French wanted this to be publicly known, while the British insisted on its secrecy. Lloyd's instructions to Jebb read: '[] it is no less important that we should both carry international public opinion with us, particularly before and during the Conference', Telegram Foreign Office to Paris, No. 1329, PREM 11/1099, 8 August 1956.

<sup>10</sup> Ambassador Makins reported that the speech was received well, and that one understood the necessity of military precautions, although that would not imply American support for employing force; Makins to Foreign Office, Telegram 1691, PREM 11/1099 (therefore seen by Eden), 10 August 1956.

<sup>11</sup> Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, pp. 150-151; Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, p. 112.

2. Apprehension of the conference's results. Lord Salisbury's doubts about the outcome of the Conference were a response to discussions in the Egypt Committee meeting in the evening of 9 August, at which only Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, Lloyd, Home, Thorneycroft, and Brook had been present. The group had been discussing the dilemma that, while wanting to appear willing to accept a diplomatic solution, the government would have to set the military machine in motion while the conference was still going on. Furthermore, it was recognized that Parliament's approval might be in doubt and a division of the House might reveal only a small majority for the Government. For the first time, this group of senior Ministers came up with the idea that what was needed, was a provocative act by Egypt. The Committee asked Selwyn Lloyd to produce a paper on the international legal aspects of the use of force<sup>12</sup>. This memorandum would be ready by 18 August.

This solution was the central thought of Eden's later reply to Salisbury's letter. Eden stated that the Conference should produce some form of international control of the Canal. In case Nasser rejected this arrangement, the other nations should refuse to pay their shipping dues. If Nasser would not then allow them to pass through the Canal, 'an incident would have been provoked by him which would justify our using force'<sup>13</sup>. The full Cabinet adopted this line of reasoning at the Cabinet meeting of 14 August too, specifying that the United States should cooperate by withholding shipping dues. The causal chain at the end of which Nasser would be willing to provoke an incident was never questioned<sup>14</sup>. Later that afternoon Norman Brook submitted a provisional timetable to the Egypt Committee, which met after the full Cabinet. It suggested that Nasser would respond to a note, asking him to accept the majority recommendation of the Conference, within four days. Egypt's counter-proposals could then be rejected one week later, and after two days (7 September was the provided date), ships could sail<sup>15</sup>.

3. Military planning. British decision making was also affected by changes in the original military plan, due to objections from British Task Force Commanders. They reckoned Port Said a place far from ideal for a rapid build-up of forces<sup>16</sup>, and thought Alexandria much more suitable. The new plan, presented on 10 August, proposed a landing of 80,000 troops

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<sup>12</sup> EC(56)13, PREM 11/1099, 9 August 1956.

<sup>13</sup> PREM 11/1099, Eden to Salisbury.

<sup>14</sup> CM(56)59, PREM 11/1099, 14 August 1956.

<sup>15</sup> James, Anthony Eden, pp. 499-500.

<sup>16</sup> Port Said was at the end of a narrow causeway, and 50 miles away from the nearest jet airfield.

at Alexandria, which would advance on Cairo. This threat alone, it was assumed, would provoke the fall of the Egyptian Government and, with a new Government installed, British and French troops could march to the Canal Zone<sup>17</sup>. Despite Eden's initial objections to the plan, because of its military risks<sup>18</sup>, the Egypt Committee endorsed the new plan. Because of its clear objective to topple Nasser, it would be much harder to defend this operation in front of national and international public opinion. This consideration added considerably to the feeling that American support at the Conference was needed. This is why Eden suggested on 14 August, when he told the full Cabinet that military planning had been completed, that 'there would be [] a difficult question of timing'. Indeed, he recognized that American support of economic sanctions against Egypt, including the withholding of shipping dues, would be necessary<sup>19</sup>. After the Cabinet, later that afternoon, when a timetable was presented to the Egypt Committee, he suggested that a final decision to launch any attack should be delayed. Clearly, the new military plans demanded an unequivocal outcome of the Conference, including firm American support.

British decisionmakers, both informally (correspondence Eden-Salisbury), and in the Egypt Committee, thus initially entertained rather simple visions of what the Conference would be like. Once they realized that things might not work that smoothly, and that the new military plan had some serious consequences, they reasoned that Egyptian provocation was needed. This induced them to think that simply withholding shipping dues would provoke Nasser into further action.

These considerations set the tone for the British approach to the London Conference that opened on 16 August. Some preliminary conclusions could be made about the decision making process.

(1) The Cabinet was not informed of the details of military planning. However, when before the Cabinet meeting of 14 August it had become clear that decisions about the use of

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of these plan, Kyle, 'Britain and the Crisis, 1955-1956', in Louis and Owen (eds.), Suez 1956. The Crisis and its Consequences, pp. 115-116. Cf. EC(56)15, 10 August 1956, PREM 11/1099.

<sup>18</sup> André Beaufre, The Suez Expedition, pp. 28-29. Beaufre arrived in London on 10 August, and heard of the change of plans and of Eden's opposition from General Stockwell.

<sup>19</sup> CM(56)59, 14 August 1956, PREM 11/1099.

force might have to be taken at some nearby stage<sup>20</sup>, few Cabinet members seemed worried about the small circle to whom decision making had been entrusted. Only Duncan Sandys would write to Eden complaining about the lack of information<sup>21</sup>.

(2) The role of an even smaller group of Ministers within the Egypt Committee becomes increasingly important. First, important considerations were made at a meeting at which a small group of Ministers, most of whom had met informally during the period of decision 1, were present. Second, a kind of circuit of letters emerges between Salisbury and Eden. Similarly, Macmillan writes memos to Eden before putting things, such as Israeli involvement, to the full Egypt Committee. Third, Salisbury and Lloyd are present at Eden's meeting with Gaitskell and other Labour M.P.'s at 14 August. The Cabinet therefore appears as a body which authorizes Committee decisions rather than a place of genuine discussion<sup>22</sup>. These patterns were to be reinforced during the days of the Conference.

#### 11.4 The London Conference

Between the opening of the Conference on 16 August and the moment that Menzies accepted the chairmanship of the delegation that would go to Cairo, the situation was becoming difficult for those British policymakers that had thought that the Conference would produce either Nasser's retreat or military action. First, Lloyd's paper on the legitimate use of force under international law, which had been ready on 18 August and was discussed at the Egypt Committee two days later, made it clear that armed intervention was justifiable only if four situations would occur<sup>23</sup>: interference with a British warship, an action which endangered the lives of British subjects, the refusal to let a ship pass because of a refusal to pay her dues, or seizure of the Suez Base<sup>24</sup>. Second, it was realized that at some stage it would become very

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<sup>20</sup> 'Just before the Cabinet I saw Walter Monckton who is also depressed by the prospect of military op[erations] and feels that the senior civil servants are against it, but he realized that to row back now would be fatal for the Government', Clark, 'Whitehall Diary', entry 14 August 1956, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> James, Anthony Eden, p. 499.

<sup>22</sup> Although it would be incorrect to say that Eden, or other Egypt Committee members, misled the Cabinet. He, certainly, did not hesitate to use emotive persuasion. For instance, at the Cabinet meeting of 14 August Menzies held, at Eden's request, a vigorous speech in which he portrayed Nasser as a familiar military dictator; CM(56)59, 14 August 1956, PREM 11/1099.

<sup>23</sup> PREM 11/1099, memorandum by the Foreign Secretary, 18 August 1956.

<sup>24</sup> When Great Britain left the Suez Canal Zone in June 1956, it remained entitled to leave supplies that could be used, whenever a situation would occur in which troops could legally reenter the area, as provided by the 1954 Canal Treaty.

difficult to employ military force, because of the international support that Nasser would have mounted during and after the Conference. The Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Norman Brook, suggested to Eden that after 15 September his support would outweigh support for military action. Third, at home those voices gained strength which urged that reference of the dispute to the United Nations should precede military action. However, the United States did not show much enthusiasm for such a move; moreover, military preparations would be ready soon (30 August), so that a final decision could be taken by 27 August<sup>25</sup>.

Decision making can therefore be characterized as almost panic-like, at least among three or four important politicians, Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, and Lloyd. They seem to have virtually prepared the meetings of the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet during this period. Their approach seems to have been influenced by their contacts with Dulles who had come to the London Conference.

One day before the start of the conference Eden had already defined the stakes: 'PM said at one point this morning people still talk about the danger of our alienating India, or worrying Africa, but the fact is that if we lose out in the Middle East we shall be immediately destroyed'<sup>26</sup>. Three days later, Macmillan, in a similar analysis, contemplating 'the end of British influence and strength for ever', wondered '[o]n what principle can we base a "casus belli"? How do we get from the Conference leg to the use of force?'. That evening he dined with Dulles, and once more tried to convince Dulles that '[] in the last resort, we must use force and defy opinion, here and overseas. [Dulles] really agreed with our position. But he hopes (and he may be right) that Nasser will have to yield in due course. This again lights up the frightful problem of how to keep a military expedition [] "all dressed up and nowhere to go"'<sup>27</sup>.

Next day Macmillan and Salisbury met U.S. Ambassador Aldrich at Hatfield. They wanted to know the American attitude towards referring the dispute to the United Nations. Aldrich said that Dulles was strongly opposed to this course. Looking for an explanation, Macmillan reasoned that the American position was not due to doubts Dulles might have about the legal strength of a complaint against Nasser, but rather to the American fear that the Panama Canal would be drawn into a U.N.-discussion of international control of waterways<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> EC(56)16, 16 August 1956, PREM 11/1104.

<sup>26</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall Diary', entry 15 August 1956, p. 113.

<sup>27</sup> Diary entry 18 August 1956, quoted in Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 408.

<sup>28</sup> Macmillan Riding the Storm, p. 118.

Macmillan noted in his diary that both he and Salisbury found Dulles 'rather "sticky"', and that he could not 'help feeling that he really wants us "to go it alone", and has been trying to help us by creating the right atmosphere'<sup>29</sup>.

At the same time, pressure was put on participants at the Conference in lunches with Eden and apparently handpicked Cabinet members on 16, 17, 21, and 22 August. On 15 August Eden's private Secretary, Philip de Zalueta, sent a list of lunch guests<sup>30</sup>. Included were Salisbury, Kilmuir, Lennox Boyd, Monckton, Home, Macmillan, and Thorneycroft, all hard-liners, except for Monckton, who at this stage had not yet expressed his doubts. Butler, at that stage the Cabinet member least in favour of military action, was conveniently on holiday between 15 and 21 August.

The pressure on the Americans, however, was of no avail. Dulles was not prepared to lead the delegation to Nasser, despite his strong speech at the opening of the Conference. Things looked even worse when Eden told the Egypt Committee on 20 August that Dulles had said to him that the United States could neither increase her economic pressure on Egypt nor block the payment of transit dues by American ships 'since this would lead to difficulties with the U.S. Treasury over the control of Egyptian Government holdings in the United States'<sup>31</sup>. The withholding of transit dues had been seen as a way of provoking Nasser into retaliation. Yet, American support of this measure was obviously indispensable.

This may then explain the meeting of a small group of senior ministers just before the mid-day Cabinet on 21 August. The crisis-like proportions of the situation are evident from Macmillan's diary notes of that day: Macmillan clearly opposed the possibility that a committee, which would be sent to Nasser, would engage in negotiations. It should only give 'explanations and elucidations'. Negotiating would be 'very alarming. It's too much like Canossa'<sup>32</sup>. The informal meeting therefore clearly faced an equivocal outcome of the situation; once again, provocative action against Egypt was seriously considered<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Macmillan diary entry 19 August 1956, Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 409.

<sup>30</sup> De Zalueta to Monckton, 15 August 1956, Monckton papers, 6(139-141), Bodleian Library, Oxford.

<sup>31</sup> EC(56)18, Confidential Annex, 20 August 1956, PREM 11/1099.

<sup>32</sup> Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 108, diary entry, 21 August 1956.

<sup>33</sup> The only record which gives a bit of insight into what happened can be found in the files of Anthony Head. C.E. Key reported to Head that 'Sir Norman Brook spoke to Sir Richard Powell this morning and said that a small group of Ministers thought that it might be a good thing to take some provocative action against Egypt and suggested that we might start moving munitions out of the [Suez Canal] Base in a rather big way'. C.E. Key to Head, DUS(A)/BM/425, 21 August 1956, WO 32/16709.

The dilemma was resolved with the decision to ask Menzies to head the delegation to Nasser, but not to give him the authority to negotiate with the Egyptian Government. This was coordinated with Dulles. Dulles, Eden, and Lloyd rang Menzies at 2 A.M. and asked him to come over to the American Embassy. There they asked him to become chairman of the delegation<sup>34</sup>. Menzies reluctantly agreed, and 22 August was used to put pressure on other countries' delegations to accept the proposal that had been worked out by Eden, Dulles, and Lloyd. Eventually, 18 out of 22 nations would adopt their proposals.

### 11.5 Independent variables

Given the structure of the decision making process groupthink is likely to have played a role in the period regarding decision 2 (2 August to 22 August, 2 A.M.). Notably the Egypt Committee meeting of 9 August with only a small group of Ministers and the informal meeting 45 minutes before the Cabinet meeting on 21 August suggest that decision making was getting more concentrated in the hands of a group even smaller than the regular Egypt Committee.

Can any symptoms of groupthink be discerned ? (1) Self-censorship of personal doubts. On 9 August Salisbury wrote a letter to Eden about the possibility of an equivocal outcome of the Conference. In his reply Eden suggested that the withholding of shipping dues as the solution if Nasser refused international control of the Canal. The problem that Salisbury brought up is therefore ignored until it resurfaces when during the Conference it becomes clear that Dulles does not want to head a delegation. Rather than discussing the matter in the Egypt Committee, Salisbury preferred discussing this matter privately with Eden, and seemed temporarily relieved after Eden's reply. Had the matter been discussed right away, a new, surprising situation around 20 August might have been avoided.

(2) Illusion of unanimity. (1) On 2 August when the Chiefs of Staff presented their first military plan to the Egypt Committee, the members of the Committee had a tough discussion on the importance of going to the United Nations. That night Salisbury wrote a reassuring letter to Eden, comforting him that unity was not lost: 'My dear Anthony, I felt today that we were very unhelpful with our ifs and ands over the United Nations etc. But, tiresome though all these things are - & short though the time is in which decisions have to be made - I really think we made some progress []'<sup>35</sup>. (2) When during the London Conference delegates of

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<sup>34</sup> Menzies, Afternoon Light, pp. 156-157.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in James, Anthony Eden, pp. 483-484. It is a mystery to me how James concludes from this letter that Salisbury himself was at that moment troubled by moral and legal concerns, given the next passage in Salisbury's letter in which he seems to agree with a scheme to 'abuse' the United  
(continued...)



important nations were lunching with Eden, only hard-line British Ministers (or people not yet known to be dissenting, such as Monckton) were asked to join in. Most important absentee was Butler, who happened to be on holiday.

(3) Illusion of invulnerability. Some members of the inner circle around Eden were clearly irritated by criticism. When Eden, Salisbury, and Lloyd met with a Labour delegation on 14 August, Salisbury had an outburst, according to Eden's diary: 'Gaitskell gave us a donnish lecture about the situation of inordinate length but of unremarkable quality. We listened with all the attention we cd command but suddenly Bobbety [Salisbury] cd take no more & burst out with indignation that he and the Prime Minister, having spent all their lives in foreign policy, cd not see the purpose of this lecture []'<sup>36</sup>.

The small group of Salisbury, Macmillan, Lloyd, and Eden was also responsible for interpreting the American attitude to the Cabinet in this period, as they met with Dulles and Aldrich. While it was therefore an inner circle which actually formed opinion on the United States position, it was primarily Eden who communicated this to the Egypt Committee and Cabinet. Here is where individual factors come into play. The most important development, from the point of the decision making process, is the fact that at the Cabinet meeting on 21 August Eden discussed the American attitude only because he was asked to do so. In his discussion Eden only referred to the American attitude towards economic measures (withholding shipping dues, etc.) and not to the question of military action<sup>37</sup>. He had been much more straightforward in the Egypt Committee the day before. It is worth quoting his perception of the United States' position at some length:

'It had been pointed out to him [Dulles] that the Government of the United Kingdom could not accept a long delay in any settlement, since once the military preparations had been completed, the forces involved could not be maintained in a state of readiness for an indefinite time. Mr. Dulles had recognised the value of these military preparations in evincing the determination of the United Kingdom to reach a satisfactory settlement, but he was not in favour of provoking Colonel Nasser into taking further action which would justify the use of military force. He had indicated that if the United Kingdom and France became involved in war, United States forces would not be able to join in military operations, since the United States Government could not justify going to war over oil in the Middle East []'.

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<sup>35</sup>(...continued)

Nations rather than go there with honest intentions: '[] Bob Dixon, whom some of us had a word with since I saw you, has an idea about a form of reference to the UN which may turn out to have advantages over anything we have thought of yet'.

<sup>36</sup> Eden's diary, entry 14 August 1956, quoted by James, Anthony Eden, pp. 492-493.

<sup>37</sup> CM(56)60, 21 August 1956.

Nevertheless, Dulles had told Eden that he had warned the Soviet Union's Foreign Secretary Shepilov that the United States would provide material support to Britain and France in case of hostilities<sup>34</sup>. This suggests that Eden had come close to Macmillan's (and possibly Salisbury's) opinion that Dulles had implicitly conveyed the message that they wanted the United Kingdom and France to go it alone, but that indirect support would be forthcoming.

**The organizational context.** Finally, it seems evident that part of the decision making process had been affected by the military's change of plans. The Forces' Commanders who would have to do the actual fighting had rejected the original idea of landing at Port Said had been rejected, because they found it too risky. The alternative that the Chiefs of Staff formally presented on 10 August brought further complications, because landing at Alexandria and marching in the direction of Cairo was much harder to defend to domestic and international public opinion. This clearly was an additional factor that caused the inner circle of Ministers to think that somehow provocative action by Egypt would be needed in order to justify the use of force against Egypt. For the time being, however, the Menzies mission gave them some breathing space.

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<sup>34</sup> EC(56)18, Confidential Annex, 20 August 1956.

## Chapter 12: Decision 3: S.C.U.A. and the withdrawal of the pilots

### 12.1 The dilemma

The London Conference thus sent Menzies with the Eighteen Powers' Proposal to Cairo. The British Government had assumed that Nasser would either accept internationalization of the Canal, or flatly reject the proposals, because the Menzies mission had not been given authority to engage in further negotiations. Dulles, meanwhile, who had hoped that his diplomatic efforts would cause such a long delay that the feeling of crisis would have faded, and force could thus be avoided, thought that France and the United Kingdom were not inclined to accept further delay. Menzies first met with Nasser on 3 September, and his mission's proposals were formally rejected by Nasser on 9 September. Dulles, knowing that a crisis might be precipitated if Menzies had to leave Cairo without Nasser having accepted the Conference's ideas, came up with the idea of an Association of Users of the Suez Canal (later to be baptized S.C.U.A.) to which shipping dues should be paid, a fair share of which would be handed over to Egypt.

France and Great Britain were not certain of Dulles's intentions: was this a proposal to de facto internationalize the administration of the Canal, and thus a slap in the face of Nasser, or just another stalling technique? Eventually the British Cabinet would adopt the S.C.U.A.-proposal on 11 September and agreed that another Conference should be held in London in order found this association. But, directly related to this decision, the Egypt Committee had taken another important decision on September 7, that is, to ask the Suez Canal Company to withdraw its pilots from the Canal, expecting that traffic in the Canal would then come to a standstill.

Both decisions should be analyzed in the context of uncertainty, first, about the outcome of Menzies mission to Nasser, and, second, about the American position. I contend that the decision to withdraw the pilots was a deliberate attempt to bring matters to a head, and provoke military action, despite the adherence to another diplomatic effort.

### 12.2 The structure of decision making

Chart 12.1 offers an overview of the decisionmaking process between 2 August, 2.30 A.M., and 11 September<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be realized that Dulles's proposals regarding a Users' Association were discussed in bilateral exchanges between Washington and the United Kingdom (excluding the French), and within certain Whitehall circles, but never in public until its formal announcement by Eden in the House of Commons on 12 September.

**Chart 12.1: decision making structure of decision 4**

22 Aug	11.00 A.M. 11.30 A.M.	Tripartite consultations: Dulles, Lloyd, Pineau Egypt Committee (EC)
23 Aug	morning 11.00 A.M. 11.30 A.M. 12.15 P.M. 03.00 P.M.	London Conference ends Tripartite consultations EC Cabinet Informal meeting of Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, Butler, Head, Heath
24 Aug	10.00 A.M. noon ?? ??	D(T)C EC Eden and Lloyd (together with Beeley from the Foreign Office) meet Dulles Macmillan meets Dulles
26 Aug	??	Macmillan meets Monckton
27 Aug	06.00 P.M.	EC
28 Aug	10.00 A.M. 11.00 A.M. 03.30 P.M.	D(T)C Cabinet EC (suddenly)
29 Aug	03.30 P.M. evening	Eden and Lloyd meet at 10, Downing St. Eden telephones Macmillan
4 Sep	01.00 P.M. 06.00 P.M.	Lloyd lunches with Macmillan EC
5 Sep	afternoon	Kirkpatrick and Eden respond to critical letter of Eisenhower
6 Sep	11.00 A.M.	Cabinet
7 Sep	morning 10.00 A.M. 'later' 02.45 P.M. 06.15 P.M.	Eden and Monckton meet Chiefs of Staff D(T)C Keithley meets Eden EC Eden and Lloyd meet at 10, Downing St.

10 Sep	12.30 P.M.	Lloyd meets Macmillan
	01.15 P.M.	Lloyd and Eden lunch
	03.00 P.M.	EC
	06.15 P.M.	Lloyd and Eden meet Mollet and Pineau at 10, Downing St.
	08.15 P.M.	Dinner at 10, Downing St. Eden, Lloyd, Mollet, Pineau, and Menzies
11 Sep	10.00 A.M.	D(T)C
	03.00 P.M.	Cabinet

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The records allow for three preliminary conclusions: (1) the decision to ask the Suez Canal Company to recall its pilots from Egypt was taken by the Egypt Committee without consulting the Cabinet; (2) the decision to accept Dulles's proposal of a users' association was made after bilateral, instead of trilateral, diplomatic exchanges between the United States and Great Britain, without France, in which neither the Egypt Committee, nor the Cabinet were involved; (3) the number of informal meetings started increasing, especially during the last week of August. All this suggests that by then the Egypt Committee may not have been the central unit of decision making, but rather an inner circle of senior ministers. The latter suggests a higher probability that individual and group variables come into play. In order to systematically analyze their influence it is useful to make a distinction between the periods before and after Dulles presented his idea of a users' association.

### 12.3 How to respond to the outcome of the Menzies mission

#### 12.3.1 Group variable

As shown earlier, the period preceding the creation of the Menzies Mission was increasingly characterized by decision-making by a small group of ministers intent on provoking Egypt into action that would justify the use of force. Now, the prospect of using force was beginning to cause some uneasiness among members of both the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet. On 22 August Butler returned from holiday and must have understood that military intervention had come much closer during his absence<sup>2</sup>. He did not raise any

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<sup>2</sup> At the EC meeting of 22 August force must have seemed an accepted option, as it was decided to postpone photographic reconnaissance flights 'at this crucial stage of the international conference', and consequently, to accept a delay of military operations by 3 to 4 days; EC(56)19, 22 August 1956, PREM 11/1104.

objections at that time, but aired his doubts to Lord Home<sup>3</sup>. Other Cabinet members had the same impression as Butler: Duncan Sandys, Minister of Housing and Local Government, complained to Eden about the lack of information to the Cabinet about the use of force<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, the Minister of Defence, Sir Walter Monckton, started doubting the wisdom of the use of force at this moment, and spoke up during the Egypt Committee's meeting of 24 August. The full Cabinet meeting of 28 August was therefore clearly meant to obtain a new mandate. The decision making process in this period shows the occurrence of several symptoms of groupthink.

1. **Illusion of unanimity.** Aware of Butler's anxiety<sup>5</sup>, Lord Home wrote to Eden on 22 August<sup>6</sup>. His letter clearly shows that until that moment Butler must have been outside the inner circle of decisionmakers, and must have had little contact with Eden. Second, the letter testifies of the conviction among members of the inner circle that dissenters were just having difficulties with the timing of force, but still fully supported the original analysis and decisions. Next day (23 August) Butler was invited to an informal meeting after the full Cabinet. Those present, besides Butler, included Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, Edward Heath (Chief Whip), and Anthony Head (Secretary of State for War). The small group discussed the possibility of provoking Egypt by taking away equipment from the Suez Base, the role of the United Nations

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<sup>3</sup> Letter Home to Eden, 22 August 1956, quoted in Lamb, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 206.

<sup>4</sup> James, Anthony Eden, p. 499.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Clark's remark that '[i]n particular Rab [Butler] is discouraged by the whole outlook and has come back from holiday a very damping influence', Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 23 August 1956, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth quoting his letter in full length: 'My dear Anthony, I sense that Rab is very unhappy. I know your time is full but if you could see him alone it would be well worth while. He is not against the use of force, but he fears that we have got ourselves into a position where we shall press the button before we have a moral basis for action which will carry conviction in this country, the free world and the Conservative party. He feels that there should be more flexibility so as to allow time for the fullest diplomatic action the extent of which cannot be foreseen. I have told him that the pressing of the button is entirely within our control and that an intensive study is being made of the 'casus belli' and the justification for armed intervention. I think his anxiety derives very largely from the fact that he was away for a fortnight and feels that possibly irrevocable decisions have been taken before the full implications of the use of force have been weighed. I may be wrong about this diagnosis but I am certainly right about his state of mind and I think if you can see him you can put everything into perspective and he will feel he has had a chance to tell you what he feels. I am sorry to add this to your preoccupation but I thought you should know. Yours, Alec. Rab, of course, does not know I am telling you of this.'; Lord Home to Eden, 22 August 1956, PREM 11/1100, quoted by Lamb (1987), p. 206.

(resort to which was ruled out by Dulles's preoccupation with the Panama Canal) and the right moment to recall the House of Commons after any decision to send in the troops<sup>7</sup>.

An even clearer example of the same phenomenon occurred after Monckton's sudden outburst of opposition against the use of force at the Egypt Committee at 24 August. Lamb suggests that this was caused by Eden's statement at the Cabinet meeting on the day before that the use of force would be justifiable under the Charter of the United Nations<sup>8</sup>. In any case, immediately after the meeting at least three participants wrote reassuring letters to Eden. One of them, Secretary to the Cabinet Sir Norman Brook, told him not to worry too much about Monckton's behaviour:

'I don't think that W[alter] M[onckton]'s statement, at the Friday meeting, need be taken too seriously. I think he [unreadable], that it was ill judged and ill timed. He was provoked into it by H[arold] M[acmillan]'s speaking as though we were deciding there and then on the date of the operation.[] As I see it, the position is this. All the members of the Cabinet, without exception, are solidly in agreement with you that we cannot afford to let Nasser get away with this []. The Cabinet are therefore agreed that we must stop this at all cost and that, in the last resort, if all other methods fail, we must be ready to use force'<sup>9</sup>.

Two others, Salisbury and Home, were clearly worried Cabinet that support for a tough line was weakening. Home saw 'a definite wavering in the attitude of some of our colleagues towards the use of force'. Both he, Salisbury, and Brook pointed out to Eden that some Cabinet members, notably Butler, Monckton, MacLeod, Selkirk, and Amory, were anxious not to use force before all diplomatic means had been exhausted: '[t]he anxieties of some, Rab for instance, might be removed if we didn't have to go on thinking in terms of button pushing and dates and had plenty of time for diplomatic manoeuvre'. All three warned Eden not to rush things and to avoid creating too large a distance between the full Cabinet and the Egypt Committee. These remarks suggests that the individual factor, that is, the way Eden handled the decision making process, might have been of importance (see 12.3.2)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> PREM 11/1100, 23 August 1956.

<sup>8</sup> Lamb, The Failure of the Eden Government, p. 207.

<sup>9</sup> Norman Brook to Eden, 25 August 1956, PREM 11/1152.

<sup>10</sup> Quotes are from Home to Eden 24 August 1956, PREM 11/1152; for Salisbury's and Brook's letters, Salisbury to Eden, 24 August 1956, quoted by Lamb, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 207; Brook to Eden, 25 August 1956, PREM 11/1152.

2. **Self-censorship of personal doubts.** Although Butler discussed his doubts with Monckton and Home, he never raised them openly or explicitly until the full Cabinet meeting on 28 August when he said that more time was needed before military action could take place. That means that Butler had accepted the idea of provoking Egypt into a incident that might justify the start of hostilities, such as at the informal meeting of 23 August. Home later recalled that 'Rab was constantly asking us all what we thought. In the end he always supported the Prime Minister's decisions with the rest of the Cabinet'<sup>11</sup>.

3. **Direct pressure on dissenting group members.** After Monckton's outburst at the Egypt Committee meeting of 24 August, Macmillan made an attempt to get him back in line. Eden's press secretary, William Clark, talked with Monckton on Monday 27 August: 'He [Monckton] told me [Clark] that he had spent the day with Macmillan on Sunday being toughened up. What PM [Eden] and HM [Macmillan] seem to want is agreement to go in if Nasser refuses to accept internationalization. WM [Monckton] refused'<sup>12</sup>. Macmillan's pressure was of no avail, as Monckton would repeat his objections at the Cabinet on 28 August. Yet he too would finally agree to the Cabinet's decision that day that '[a]s soon we were satisfied that a just settlement could not be secured through the machinery of the United Nations, we should ourselves take other steps to secure it'<sup>13</sup>. Not even Monckton therefore would go so far as rejecting force outright, and, presumably, resigning from the government.

### 12.3.2 Individual variable: directive leadership

Much of the internal dissent of Butler and Monckton seems related to the way Eden, and to a certain extent, Macmillan dominated the decision making process. Indeed, both Home and Brook would advise Eden to play the game slowly.

William Clark, who had lunch with several key participants on a regular basis throughout the crisis, noticed a hurried decision making style on 23 August. After a lunch with Lord Home he records: 'he [Home] regrets [] the hurry with which the PM pushed that vital decision [to use force] through [the] Cabinet without time for a proper decision'<sup>14</sup>. A few days later he had a conversation with Walter Monckton, who made it clear to him 'that PM

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<sup>11</sup> Home in a letter to Richard Lamb, quoted by Lamb, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 206.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 27 August 1956, p. 121.

<sup>13</sup> CM(56)62, 28 August 1956.

<sup>14</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 23 August 1956, p. 118.



is pressing Cabinet to decide for force. WM said that at last Friday's Cabinet<sup>15</sup> he had to speak up when PM and Chancellor were trying to rush things through []<sup>16</sup>.

Brook and Home warned Eden not to push the full Cabinet too hard. Brook wrote that '[a]ll this leads me to the view that it would be a mistake to put the Cabinet at the final fence too soon'; Home suggested Eden to use the planned Cabinet on 28 August to 'get their [the doubters'] feelings off their chest so that you should know where you are. [] You will know how to handle all this, but I am sure you should encourage those who have not been on the Egypt Committee to be frank and outspoken'<sup>17</sup>. All this suggests that Eden (and Macmillan) were in a hurry to have permission to move into Egypt without much delay. Moreover, it testifies to the relative isolation of Eden (and his inner circle) from the rest of the Cabinet. What considerations had caused all this hurry and protests ?

### 12.3.3 Perceptions of dilemma's

The most pressing dilemma between 22 and 28 August was the need to respond to Nasser's expected refusal of the 18 Powers Proposals. In a note, given to Eden just before the Egypt Committee meeting of 24 August, Salisbury sketches the dilemma that on the one hand diplomatic moves would be advisable, given international and national public opinion, but that on the other hand further diplomacy 'would weaken our power to resort to force' and entailed the danger that Nasser could 'get away with it'<sup>18</sup>. One way to sooth public opinion would be to refer the matter to the United Nations. Indeed on 23 August, the Egypt Committee had recognized that recourse to the Security Council seemed unavoidable, but that it would compromise military planning. The Committee 'invited the Foreign Secretary to consider how the machinery of the United Nations could best be used to present the case of the United Kingdom for any military action against Egypt'<sup>19</sup>. Yet neither these considerations nor this invitation were mentioned to the Cabinet meeting that started 45 minutes after this Egypt

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<sup>15</sup> Clark refers to the Egypt Committee meeting of 24 August.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 27 August 1956, p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> Brook to Eden, 25 August 1956; Home to Eden, 24 August 1956, PREM 11/1152.

<sup>18</sup> Salisbury to Eden, 24 August 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>19</sup> EC(56)20, Confidential Annex, 23 August 1956, PREM 11/1100.

Committee meeting<sup>20</sup>. The informal meeting immediately after the Cabinet at 3 P.M. discussed the best date to recall Parliament so as to avoid too much opposition<sup>21</sup>.

Obviously then, Lloyd's assignment to see how the use of force could best be reconciled with reference to the U.N. was an illusory attempt to satisfy both public opinion and the need to quickly proceed after the Menzies mission. Lloyd immediately asked Sir Pierson Dixon, British Ambassador to the United Nations, who happened to be in London, what to do. Dixon suggested simply informing the Security Council of the dispute. If this was not to be done, other nations would try 'to prolong the period of negotiation and possibly also to extract some commitment from us in regard to not using methods of force'. The best thing would be to let the meeting of the Security Council end without it voting on any resolution, an unusual, but not illegal move<sup>22</sup>. On 26 August, after having read Dixon's suggestion, Eden wrote to Lloyd and Salisbury that he thought the Security Council far too dangerous a place, and wondered whether referring the matter to NATO or the Western European Union would not be a solution. In their responses Lloyd and Salisbury wrote that sooner or later they would have to go to the United Nations anyway<sup>23</sup>.

The acute dilemma of having to anticipate Nasser's rejection of the 18 Powers Proposals provoked the reoccurrence of the fundamental dilemma Great Britain was perceived to be facing at this moment by most policymakers. Macmillan recorded in his diary

'The truth is that we are caught in a terrible dilemma. If we take strong action against Egypt, and as a result the Canal is closed, the pipelines to the Levant are cut, the Persian Gulf revolts and oil production is stopped-then U.K. and Western Europe have "had it" []; if we suffer a diplomatic defeat, if Nasser "gets away with it", Nuri [Prime Minister of British client state Iraq] falls, and the Middle East countries, in a ferment, "nationalise oil" [] we have equally "had it". What then are we to do ? It seems clear that we should take the only chance we have - to take strong action, and hope that thereby our friends in Middle East will stand, our enemies fall, and the oil will be saved, but it is a tremendous decision'<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. CM(56)61, 23 August 1956.

<sup>21</sup> PREM 11/1100, Record of a meeting of Ministers, 23 August 1956: the record ominously reads: 'if the Government had obtained a vote in the House, as suggested above, they could refuse to allow further discussion during this period on grounds of military security'.

<sup>22</sup> Pierson Dixon to Selwyn Lloyd, 23 August 1956, seen by Eden on 25 August, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>23</sup> Eden to Lloyd, 26 August 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>24</sup> Macmillan diary entry 25 August 1956, quoted in Horne, *Macmillan, 1894-1956*, pp. 410-411. Macmillan had expressed this perception of a choice between two negative alternatives also to Dulles, before the latter left London on 24 August. Macmillan told him that 'we had no alternative, if we could (continued...)

The Cabinet meeting of 28 August therefore had to deal with internal opposition, with international and national public opinion against the background of having to take a decision that dealt with the expected failure of the Menzies mission. The discussion seems to have been dominated by several hardliners Macmillan, Home, Salisbury, and Kilmuir, against whom Monckton and, to a lesser extent, Butler, spoke up.

Monckton's objections were not as strong as those he had raised at the Egypt Committee four days earlier. Now, he agreed that 'if all other methods proved unavailing, force would have to be used. On the other hand the Cabinet should weigh the disadvantages of using force'<sup>25</sup>. My interpretation is that this Cabinet meeting was well-prepared, not to say stage-managed, by a small group of Ministers in order to sway the Cabinet so as to reduce the possible harm of an intervention by Monckton. First of all, Eden opens with a concession by accepting referring the matter to the United Nations, thus relieving those Cabinet members, such as Duncan Sandys, who were afraid that the button would have to be pushed any minute. Only then an important memorandum is distributed, instead of handing it out before the meeting, followed by a speech by Macmillan illustrating the high stakes, backed up by Lennox Boyd, another hardliner<sup>26</sup>. After Monckton's objections Salisbury draws a parallel with Hitler and Mussolini. This theme is seldom explicitly mentioned in the minutes of either the Cabinet or Egypt Committee, yet I take it that there was a deliberate attempt to persuade the full Cabinet to continue supporting the original line of policy. Kilmuir's exposition on the lawfulness of military action must fall into the same category. I think it is therefore a bit exaggerated to call this Cabinet meeting a 'full review of the situation'<sup>27</sup>. The inner circle had

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<sup>24</sup>(...continued)

not get our way by diplomatic pressure, but to resort to force'; Macmillan, Riding the Storm, diary entry 24 August 1956, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid... Lamb therefore calls him 'only a wishy-washy opponent of war' in the full Cabinet, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 208.

<sup>26</sup> Lennox Boyd had written to Eden, after Monckton's outburst on 24 August, 'I was horrified by the doubts expressed by the Minister of Defence. All these difficulties stood out miles when we first embarked on our policy []'. If Nasser 'wins or even appears to win, we might as well as a Government (and indeed as a country) go out of business', Lennox Boyd to Eden, 24 August 1956, PREM 11/1102, quoted in Lamb, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 207.

<sup>27</sup> James, Anthony Eden, p. 411.

thus preserved unity and expected to carry public opinion by referring the matter to the United Nations<sup>28</sup>.

#### 12.4 Dulles comes up with the users' association

So far, two assumptions had guided British decision making: first, a quick and clear rejection or acceptance by Nasser of the Menzies mission, and, secondly, American support for going to the United Nations. No sooner had the Cabinet agreed to go to the United Nations, than both assumptions were proven to be false, thus creating another problematic situation. First of all, Nasser had taken his time in receiving Menzies and discussing and answering the proposals his mission had brought to Egypt. This delay much angered Eden. He called Macmillan on 29 August, after the news had broken that Nasser had finally agreed to

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<sup>28</sup> The minutes give a fair picture of how the hardliners structured the decision making process: Eden, apparently convinced by Salisbury and Lloyd, opened the meeting by stating that it would now be better to refer the matter to the United Nations in order to carry public opinion both at home and in the United States and because 'a Russian veto [] would demonstrate clearly the obstructive nature of Communist tactics'. Next a paper was handed out which explained (1) that the costs of a military operation could be borne if a large crisis were avoided and (2) that Britain's national economy depended largely on Middle East oil (this memorandum had been distributed to the Egypt Committee on 27 August; EC(56)22, 27 August 1956, EC Paper EC(56)35). Macmillan presented the paper by arguing that Nasser's ambitions threatened those supplies both directly (through the Canal) and indirectly (by his increased influence in the Middle East). In the discussion that followed, Lennox-Boyd, the Colonial Secretary, added that the Governors had communicated that if 'this contest between Colonel Nasser and the Western powers' were won by Nasser, then British influence in Aden, Somaliland, and Kenya would vanish. The same would be true for British influence in Iraq and the Persian Gulf area. The conclusion therefore was that the entire position in the Middle East was in danger of being undermined and the stability of the national economy threatened.

Then Monckton spelled out the disadvantages of the use of force. They included (1) the opposition of British and Commonwealth public opinion to military action, (2) the division such action would cause within the United Kingdom, (3) sabotage that might be expected from Arab countries, such as the cutting of pipelines, and (4) the problem, so far hardly thought of, that once British forces would move into Egypt, they would have to stay there. Monckton therefore preferred a diplomatic settlement.

After he had spoken, Salisbury drew a parallel with the 1930s: 'experience with Italy, and later with Germany, had surely shown that if the encroachments of a dictator were not checked at the outset, when comparatively little strength was needed to check them, the ultimate reckoning involved a far greater convulsion and a much greater sacrifice'. Next, Kilmuir, referring to an article in The Times by Goodhart, a Professor of International Law, tried to prove that Great Britain and France had a very strong case both morally and under international law.

Then, Butler spoke of the importance of having the support of domestic public opinion, and suggested that, first, all other diplomatic means should have been tried. Eden answered that France was 'afraid of hesitancy on our part', and that Nasser would be looking for signs of weakness. Too much lingering would therefore endanger military operations: 'a stage would soon be reached [] at which it would become difficult to preserve any large measures of flexibility in the military plan'. The final conclusion reached was that 'as soon as we were satisfied that a just settlement could not be secured through the machinery of the UN, we should ourselves take other steps to secure it'; all evidence and quotes come from CM(56)62, 28 August 1956.

see Menzies on 3 September, and said: 'these delays are really intolerable'<sup>29</sup>. Intolerable they were: for the British military timetable, that is. Nasser's eventual rejection of the proposals would not come until 9 September. By that date, events had been overtaken by a surprising American reaction to Lloyd's invitation to Dulles on 28 August to coordinate an approach to the United Nations<sup>30</sup>. On 4 September Dulles communicated through the British Ambassador in Washington, Roger Makins, his idea of a users' association. British policymakers were puzzled by this new American move<sup>31</sup>.

#### 12.4.1 Individual factors: directive leadership

As the decision to refer the matter to the United Nations was meant to remain a secret until the Menzies Mission had completed its task, and because the negotiations between the American Government and the United Kingdom on a users' association were conducted through diplomatic exchanges, decision making during the first week of September shifted to the highest level, as Eden wished to be closely involved with Lloyd's handling of foreign policy. The dynamics of Anglo-American relations in this period, and therefore the acceptance of the principle of a users' association carries the personal mark of Anthony Eden.

Eden was worried by Eisenhower's letter of 3 September which Clark judged 'most devastating' at the time: 'it is this which has brought the PM racing back almost in despair'<sup>32</sup>. Eisenhower's telegram was a clear argument against the use of force, because 'American

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<sup>29</sup> Macmillan diary entry 29 August 1956, quoted in Horne, Macmillan 1894-1956, p. 411.

<sup>30</sup> Lloyd stressed that 'as you know, it is our intention to proceed with our plans unless Nasser can be seen clearly and decisively to have given in', Lloyd to Dulles, Telegram 3931, 28 August 1956. Significantly, the British preferred to deal with the Americans first, and to involve the French only later; Lloyd to Jebb, Telegram 1501, 28 August 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>31</sup> Before Dulles's move, some members of the inner group had already started doubting the American attitude. Macmillan, who had been confident of American support for going to the U.N., wrote to Eden on 27 August that the United States Government did not block private Egyptian accounts or 'fresh accruals to the Egyptian Government []. This does not seem to be a very logical course'. Two days later, Makins reported a conversation with Dulles in which Dulles had 'agreed that the general concept of excluding military action until recourse had been had to the UN was a sound one'. Makins, however, described Dulles as 'legalistic and completely non-committal'. Some attempts were made to negotiate a trilateral policy towards the United Nations: Embassy officials discussed coordination with Dulles's officials. Topics included to contingency of a Soviet veto, and the possibility of invoking the Uniting for Peace Resolution. The Foreign Office replied that 'we have no intention of using this procedure and hope to be able to block any move by the opposition to invoke it'; Makins to Foreign Office, Telegram 1761, 29 August 1956, PREM 11/1100; Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 1788, 1 September 1956; Foreign Office to Washington Embassy, Telegram 4018, 4 September 1956, PREM 11/1100. Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 108, diary entry 24 August 1956.

<sup>32</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 5 September 1956, p. 125.

public opinion flatly rejects the thought of using force, particularly when it does not seem that every possible peaceful means of protecting our vital interests has been exhausted without result'. Worse, Eisenhower thought that going to the U.N. at this very moment would be wrong, and preferred proceeding with the Menzies mission, even if it 'may fail to give the setback to Nasser that he so much deserves'<sup>33</sup>.

Eden was clearly disappointed by Eisenhower's opposition to the use of force<sup>34</sup>.

The very day Eisenhower's letter was the hot news in Whitehall, the American President dealt another blow to British optimism by declaring to the American press that 'we are committed to a peaceful settlement of this dispute, nothing else'. This was considered to take out any pressure Menzies's mission could have on Nasser<sup>35</sup>. Interestingly, Macmillan tried to interpret Eisenhower's declaration as fitting with British objectives: '[I] read carefully, the last phrase could be interpreted to refer only to present undertakings'<sup>36</sup>.

Eden must therefore have welcomed Dulles's idea of a users' association as a possible way of extracting a commitment of the United States to a hard line towards Nasser, which Eisenhower's letter seemed to have excluded. His message to Makins in Washington makes it clear that by endorsing a users' association the United States would be obliged to pay its shipping dues no longer to Nasser, but to the new association<sup>37</sup>. In addition, he still expected the Americans to go to the United Nations with the United Kingdom and France.

At the Cabinet meeting on 6 September Eden gave a reasonably correct summary of Eisenhower's letter by explaining that the United States Government was worried that Britain and France were to use force before all other means had been tried. However, he did not tell his Ministers that Eisenhower doubted whether force should be used at all. Significantly, Eden preferred to rely on Dulles's message on the users' association and told the Cabinet that

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<sup>33</sup> Eisenhower's letter is printed in Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis*, pp. 118-120.

<sup>34</sup> Eden's scribbled some remarks on Eisenhower's message, which testified to his disillusion. Above the telegram, he wrote 'US was in favour of our continuing moves'. Next to the passage, in which Eisenhower suggests that if united diplomacy were conducted the chances would be greater that Nasser would give way without the need for any resort to force, Eden wrote: 'Foster [Dulles] advocated going on. AE'. When Eisenhower used the economic burden of prolonged military operations as another argument against the use of force, Eden underlined the word 'prolonged'. Was he thinking that Eisenhower might accept a military intervention, if only it were swift? Eisenhower to Eden, 3 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Menzies's disappointment with Eisenhower's press conference, *Afternoon Light*, p. 165.

<sup>36</sup> Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 117.

<sup>37</sup> Eden to Washington Embassy, Telegram 4032, 5 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

Dulles's letter showed 'that our continued firmness was having the effect of encouraging the United States Government to consider further means of bringing pressure to bear on Egypt'<sup>38</sup>. The Cabinet discussed and agreed to the draft response to Eisenhower, drawn up by the Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. This letter was 'really a very noble bit of prose saying we should rather die fighting than live with a thumb on our jugular vein. This is also supported by long analogies with the Rhineland, 1936, episode which is clearly in the forefront of the PM's mind'<sup>39</sup>.

While the French reluctantly agreed to go to the United Nations, and a draft resolution was already circulating between Washington, London, and Paris<sup>40</sup>, Dulles had changed his mind and suggested that it would be unwise to go to the United Nations now, and preferred to exhaust the possibilities of the 1888 Constantinople Convention first, implying that one should first try the users' association. This left the British completely in the dark as to his real intentions. Dulles had said that a resolution in the Security Council would make the parties engage in new negotiations. Egypt would 'prolong it and finally break it off and then we would be precisely where we are today'. Eden marked this passage with his pencil, and must have been uncertain as to Dulles's intentions: did he want a tough policy on Nasser, or was this just another stalling technique?<sup>41</sup>. That day Dixon, British Ambassador to the United Nations, warned Eden not to go to the United Nations without the Americans, as they might then 'even feel obliged to support another country's resolution 'not to use force without further recourse to the Council'<sup>42</sup>.

Lloyd responded, with Eden consenting, that 'Mr. Dulles's response is most disappointing. We seem to be further apart than at any time since July 26'. [] Any further dawdling along will be fatal'<sup>43</sup>. Clearly, Eden and Lloyd must have been in despair about the Americans' attitude. In this context of different wordings and proposals by Eisenhower and Dulles, and of Dulles, apparently ambiguous, it does not seem odd that the Egypt Committee

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<sup>38</sup> CM(56)63, 6 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>39</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 5 September 1956, p. 125.

<sup>40</sup> Printed in Eden, Full Circle, pp. 460-461.

<sup>41</sup> Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 1823, 7 September 1956; Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 1829, 8 September 1956.

<sup>42</sup> Dixon recommended simply writing a letter to the Council's chairman. Dixon to Foreign Office, Telegram 650, 8 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>43</sup> Foreign Office to Washington Embassy, Telegram 4102, 8 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

decided that the Company's pilots should be pulled out of the Canal in order to create chaos, and possibly, a pretext for military intervention<sup>44</sup>.

Later that day, 8 September, Roger Makins sent Eisenhower's reply to Eden's letter of 6 September. Eisenhower told Eden that he was 'making Nasser a much more important figure than he is'. Force was to be avoided because it would make Nasser an Arab hero. But, ambiguously, Eisenhower wrote that there was no public support as yet (emphasis mine) for military intervention. In short, Eisenhower recommended a slow approach through the users' association<sup>45</sup>. However, Eisenhower's restraint letter was delivered together with Makins's account of his conversation with Dulles, when the Secretary of State handed over Eisenhower's message. Dulles's words went clearly further than Eisenhower's:

'you must not think that the United States Administration were not as deeply concerned as Her Majesty's Government [], but they saw no end to the consequences of military intervention. It would be possible to occupy several key points, but in the President's view there were not enough troops and resources to put out all the fires that would be started'. Nevertheless, 'the President did not exclude the use of force in the last resort [margin marked by Eden]. Between us we could get Nasser down and the United States Administration were quite determined that this should happen. If Nasser obstructed the Canal and used force, they would use it too. But they did not believe that the methods and the tempo which we were advocating were the right ones []. Mr. Dulles said he regards his proposal [users' association] as a temporary one which might perhaps last for a year' [double line in the margin by Eden].<sup>46</sup> 'He [Dulles] believes that there were acceptable courses between occupation of the Canal and yielding to Nasser, and he was trying to work one out. [] On parting he said he realised our need to collaborate with the French. Nevertheless, this was a complication for the administration. It was much easier for them to work these problems out with us. They distrusted French security in general, not only from the technical standpoint'<sup>47</sup>.

Now this must have been a puzzling situation. Eisenhower rejects force; Dulles accepts it under specific circumstances, e.g., in response to Egypt's obstruction of the Canal, or, in the last resort; moreover, Dulles seemed to exclude the occupation of certain key points only on practical military grounds, not on political; more importantly, Dulles suggests that the Americans agreed to the immediate British objective, that is, Nasser's downfall; and, last but not least, Dulles refers to Anglo-American cooperation. Undoubtedly, the latter was an attempt

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<sup>44</sup> EC(56)25, 7 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>45</sup> Eisenhower's letter is printed in Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis*, pp. 123-125.

<sup>46</sup> Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 1839, 8 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>47</sup> Washington Embassy to Foreign office, Telegram 1840, 8 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.



by Dulles to separate the British from the much more aggressive French, but it is much more likely, given the prevailing British perception of the nature of Anglo-American relations (see chapters 3 and 7), that British policymakers would interpret this as the United States asking the United Kingdom to lead the dance.

Under this dilemma, the solution to recall the Company's pilots, while simultaneously abandoning the idea to go to the United Nations forthwith, and adopting the idea of a users' association, must have seemed ideal. By appearing to comply with the United States' preference for diplomatic means, the Americans would become more closely involved through the paying of shipping dues to the association, and American consent to stronger measures might still be won if the shipping in the Canal would break down due to the absence of competent pilots<sup>48</sup>. Moreover, it would satisfy the French who were becoming impatient over all these hesitations. Thus, the withdrawal of the pilots was finally announced on 11 September<sup>49</sup>. A fortnight later it would appear that Nasser could perfectly manage the traffic in the Canal.

It should therefore be concluded that Eden, and, to a lesser extent, Lloyd were at the centre of British communications with the United States regarding the United Nations and the users' association. Although the specific characteristics of Eden's operational code do not add to an understanding of the decision making process, it seems that Eden, and Lloyd, for that matter, perceived the American attitude according to the so-called attitudinal prism: they assumed that Great Britain and the United States had the same objectives in the Middle East. Traditionally, the United States always had to be cajoled into supporting British policies in the area: withdrawing the pilots and the users' association seemed two perfect methods to bring the Americans over to the British side.

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<sup>48</sup> The idea of withdrawing the pilots had been entertained by the Egypt Committee for a long time, but did not become part of the agenda until the first week of September as one of the alternative policies by which the Egyptian Government might be provoked into an armed conflict: on 5 September Harold Watkinson, Minister of Transport, had explained to Monckton and Lloyd what was likely to happen, if the Suez Canal Company were asked to withdraw the pilots. It would eventually lead to abrogation of the 1954 treaty with Egypt and the sending of troops to the Canal zone; Watkinson to Monckton, 5 September 1956; Watkinson to Lloyd 5 September 1956, Monckton Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford, 6(168-170), 6(171).

<sup>49</sup> The French Foreign Minister, Christian Pineau, was afraid that Dulles would try and stop the pilots' leaving Egypt. He said England and France should 'dig our toes in and say firmly "no"' to Dulles. As a matter of fact, Pineau had already conveyed his opinion that the Americans 'will never authorize any action likely to provoke the fall of Nasser, at any rate until after the American elections, which could mean that we should never be able to take such action at all', Jebb to Foreign Office, Telegrams 294 and 295, 9 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

However, not only the American attitude created a provocative context in which Eden must have felt obliged to act both strongly and in a restrained way at the same time. Two more pieces of information added to the pressure. First, the appearance of a memo which made it clear that a trade embargo against Egypt would be as damaging to Great Britain as to Egypt. Second, when Eden and Monckton met with the Chiefs of Staff in the morning of 7 September 1956, they presented yet another change of military plans. This brings us to the influence of organizational variables.

#### 12.4.2 The influence of the organizational context

In their proposal of 7 September, the Chiefs of Staff abandoned the idea of landing at Alexandria, and returned to their first choice of Port Said. James points out that the traditional explanation of this change of plans is a political one: that politicians found Port Said more attractive than Alexandria because it could be better justified in face of public opinion<sup>50</sup>. The curious point is, however, that the members of the Egypt Committee were particularly angry with the military for the change of plan, which implied more postponement, and new preparations<sup>51</sup>. The records are of little avail. It appears that Eden was much frustrated by the comments of his military staff. The curious thing is that he interpreted their report as an urge to move ahead at a time when international and national support was not yet sufficient<sup>52</sup>. It is much more likely that the Chiefs of Staff tried to impress the Egypt Committee with the problem of civilian casualties and the need for strengthening moral support for action, while at the same conveying the message that military operations might soon be thwarted by bad

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Fullick and Power, Suez: The Double War, pp. 55-56.

<sup>51</sup> James concludes that the thing remains unexplained; Horne suggests that the new plan was Mountbatten's initiative, supported by Hailsham, as he was afraid of a large number of civilian casualties; James, Anthony Eden, pp. 507-509; Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 413; no source is mentioned, however.

<sup>52</sup> Monckton circulated the Chiefs' report to senior Ministers on 6 September. The report first sets out the consequences of further delay of military operations. Only towards the end do they propose the new plan, Musketeer Revise. The Chiefs remark that after 6 October weather conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean would worsen to such an extent that military action might have to be postponed until Spring 1957. Eden wrote in the margin of his copy: 'Non sense'. Next, the Chiefs point out that action before 6 October permitted 10 days of further delay, but no more. Moreover, things would be complicated by the fact that by that time Soviet submarines with Egyptian personnel would arrive in the Eastern Mediterranean. In the margin Eden wrote: 'they favoured postponement'. Clearly then, Eden thought that the Chiefs of Staff were pressing for a quick decision. The new plan involved an attack on Port Said instead of Alexandria. The Chiefs added: 'it is [] of the greatest importance that this invasion of Egypt is launched with our moral case unassailable'. Eden wrote: 'yet he won't delay to strengthen it'; PREM 11/1100, EC memo EC(56)43, 6 September 1956.

weather. Thus they might have attempted to persuade the politicians to realize that force might not be a real option after all.

More evidence of peculiar military planning comes from a letter of Watkinson, Minister of Transport<sup>53</sup>, to Monckton on 7 September. Watkinson opened by saying that 'I am afraid I have some very awkward things to raise at the Egypt Committee this afternoon and as most of them concern the Services, particularly the Army, I thought I ought to give you some warning as I have not been able to see you. It is against this background that I must say that it seems to me that the Army are grossly over-estimating the number of vehicles they require'. Watkinson explained that the Army allocated one vehicle to every three men, and that, by consequence, too many civilian transport ships had to be requisitioned. This would soon lead to economic and political difficulties. People would start wondering why so many ships were needed<sup>54</sup>.

The question thus arises whether (parts of) the Services, whether intentionally or unintentionally, contributed to further delays of military operation by their method of meticulous planning. Certainly, the volte face in the planning of the Chief of Staff seems peculiar. The point of civil casualties is a relevant one, but the really relevant question is not as much the change of plan itself, but its timing<sup>55</sup>. Fortunately, it is not essential for this study to discuss the intentions of the Chiefs of Staff. It can safely be said that the very presentation of Musketeer Revise at that moment structured the political decision making process. It implied a further delay of at least two weeks. Exploring the possibilities of a users' association might thus be a welcome method of keeping up the pressure on Egypt and raising more international support.

### 12.5 The decision to adopt S.C.U.A.

On the day that the Chiefs of Staff presented their new ideas, the news came through that Nasser had rejected the 18 Powers' proposals, presented to him by the Menzies Mission; this called for a strong response, but military action was not an immediate option, because the

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<sup>53</sup> Not a member of the Cabinet, but a regular attendant of the Egypt Committee.

<sup>54</sup> Watkinson to Monckton, DEFE 13/12, 7 September 1956.

<sup>55</sup> Why did the military come up with Musketeer Revise only on 6 September? It could be suggested that for those who did not know about the plans for a users' association (and the Chiefs did not), it must have seemed that military intervention was imminent, because no-one expected Nasser to accept the proposals put forward to him by Menzies. It may have been the case that the military did not want to fight, at least not at that moment under such circumstances, with the plans at hand. Suggesting Musketeer Revise should then be interpreted as a stalling technique.

military's new ideas had caused another fortnight's delay and because the Americans seemed opposed to it at this moment. The adoption of the idea of a users' association and the withdrawal of the pilots seemed an attractive way out. The consequence, however, was that the policymakers faced a new set of dilemmas. First, no full commitment had yet been obtained from the Americans that they would turn such a users' association into an instrument of keeping pressure on Egypt. Yet, the failure of the Menzies mission required the Government to show that the United States, France, and Great Britain were able to make a powerful diplomatic move. Second, the end of the Menzies mission obliged the Government to answer questions in Parliament, and it was expected that the Opposition would try to extract a promise from the Government not to use force unless recourse to the United Nations had been taken, an option to which the United States was strongly opposed.

The aspect which worried British policymakers most was the prospect of Nasser 'getting away with it'. Between the Egypt Committee's meeting of 7 September and the Cabinet's adoption of the users' association on 11 September perceptions of what was at stake were narrowed down to the loss of British prestige if Nasser should seem to have successfully resisted Western diplomatic pressure. Macmillan pointed the gloomiest picture and, once again, sketched a choice between two negative outcomes: '[w]e shall be ruined either way; but we shall be more inevitably and finally ruined if we are humiliated'<sup>56</sup>. Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, who had drafted Eden's response to Eisenhower's letter of 3 September, wrote of his disappointment at Eisenhower's reaction to that response, indicating that, according to him, Great Britain would be wrecked within a year, or two. He thought Dulles' users' association scheme impractical, which 'would leave us with no other choice, but the use of force or to surrender to Nasser'<sup>57</sup>.

It was therefore important to try to obtain a commitment from the Americans to pay shipping dues to the new organization and to use that money as a leverage to influence Egypt's policies. Moreover, at this instance it was necessary to act unitedly with the Americans. Thus

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<sup>56</sup> Macmillan, diary entry 9 September 1956, Horne, *Macmillan 1894-1956*, p. 415.

<sup>57</sup> Kirkpatrick to Makins, Telegram 4144, 10 September 1956, FO 800/740. 'I wish the President were right. But I am convinced that he is wrong. Nasser in himself is not an important figure, nor can Egypt by herself deal us a mortal blow. But if we sit back whilst Nasser consolidates his position and gradually acquires control of the oil bearing countries, he can and is, according to our information, resolved to wreck us. If the Middle East is denied to us for a year or two our gold reserves will disappear. If our gold reserves disappear, the sterling area will disintegrate. If the sterling area disintegrates and we have no reserves, we shall not be able to maintain a force in Germany or, indeed, anywhere else. I doubt whether we shall be able to pay for the bare minimum necessary for our defence. And a country which cannot provide for its defence, is finished'.

Lloyd's flow of telegrams to Washington to attain both objectives, in which Lloyd pointed out that if the Government were not able to offer a users' association to the House of Commons, it would not be able to refuse Parliament's expected request to go to the Security Council. This clearly was meant as a way to put pressure on the Americans, as the Cabinet had already accepted to go to the United Nations, before Dulles came up with his new idea. Much more relevant to understand the British Government's mood was another of Lloyd's considerations: 'This [] rejection [of the Menzies mission's proposals] will be a second blow to Western influence in the Middle East unless it is followed at once by a statement of a clear and decisive Western policy in the light of it'<sup>58</sup>.

No decisive American commitment as to the payment of shipping dues was obtained, however. The decision of the Egypt Committee to adopt the plan for a users' association must therefore be explained by the British confidence that Americans could be cajoled into accepting such strong measures. Macmillan wrote on 8 September: 'It is vital to keep the pressure up on our American friends', and on the 9th: 'the more we can persuade them [the Americans] of our determination to risk everything in order to beat Nasser, the more help we shall get from them'<sup>59</sup>. Macmillan's analysis points to the common orientation of British foreign policymakers, the so-called attitudinal prism, which centered around the belief that the United States could be persuaded to defend British interests in the Middle East.

When the Cabinet adopted Dulles's proposal on 11 September, it became immediately clear, that a users' association was only a temporary compromise. Macmillan thought that if the users' association plan failed, Britain could and should resort to force. He was supported by Kilmuir and Salisbury who thought force permissible under the U.N.-Charter under such circumstances. Monckton argued that the users' plan could not be more than a prelude to negotiation or an appeal to the United Nations, and warned against resorting to force without full American support<sup>60</sup>. Much therefore depended on full American cooperation regarding the implementation of the users' association scheme. Unfortunately, no sooner had the Cabinet adopted the proposal, and the House of Commons started assembling in the morning of 12

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<sup>58</sup> Foreign Office to Washington Embassy, Telegram 4136, 10 September 1956, WO 32/16709.

<sup>59</sup> Macmillan diary entries, 8 and 9 September 1956, Horne, *Macmillan, 1894-1956*, pp. 413, 415.

<sup>60</sup> CAB 128/30. Cf. James, *Anthony Eden*, pp. 511-512. Lamb argues that the Cabinet gave Eden 'an overwhelming mandate for attack', if the users' club failed, but Clark, reading the Cabinet minutes on 13 September 1956, wrote in his diary: 'the belated Cab minutes from Tuesday [11 September] reveal that there is a severe split in the Cab. [] I can't say that I know which way [users' club as prelude to force or to negotiations] the Cab made up its mind. I doubt if it did'; Lamb, *Failure of the Eden Government*, p. 215; Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 13 September 1956, p. 129.

September, than the news from Washington seemed to convey only a qualified American commitment. This was to be the first element eventually adding up to the British Government growing increasingly annoyed with the American attitude and eventually deciding to go it alone.

## Chapter 13: Decision 4: Reference to the Security Council

### 13.1 The dilemma

The month of September 1956 was characterized by an increased British effort to persuade the United States to consider the users' club, which was to become known as Suez Canal Users' Association (S.C.U.A.), as a tool of influence to use against Egypt's Middle Eastern policy. The Americans were very reluctant to agree with this view and remained hesitant to pay their shipping dues to this newly established authority. At the same time it became clear that the withdrawal of the pilots had been of no avail and that Egypt was perfectly capable of managing the Canal. In this context the British Cabinet decided to refer the matter to the Security Council, despite Dulles's warning not to do so, and thus added to the growing apprehension and misunderstandings between Washington and London.

### 13.2 The structure of decision

Chart 4 gives an outline of most relevant meetings leading to the decision to go to the United Nations, that could be traced.

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#### Chart 13.1: decision making structure of decision 4

11 Sep	After Cabinet	Informal meeting of Salisbury, Kilmuir, Butler, and Macmillan.
12 Sep	10.45 A.M. afterwards	Egypt Committee House of Commons debate
13 sep	2.30 P.M. 6.00 P.M.	House of Commons: vote of confidence Informal meeting of at least Eden, Macmillan, and Butler, Salisbury, and Kilmuir
14 Sep	10.00 A.M. 11.00 A.M. 4.15 P.M.	D(T)C Cabinet EC
15 Sep	???	Eden phones Macmillan
16 Sep	???	Eden phones Macmillan
17 Sep	5 P.M. 9 P.M.	EC Ministerial meeting at 10, Downing Street

18 Sep	10.00 A.M. after dinner	D(T)C Macmillan and Salisbury meet Dulles and Aldrich at the American Embassy
19 Sep	morning ??? 3.15 A.M. after EC	Staff conference, Chiefs of Staff, Monckton, Eden, Kirkpatrick Opening S.C.U.A. Conference EC Macmillan meets Eden
20 Sep	??? dinner	Eden meets William Clark to discuss latter's paper on public opinion Eden and Lloyd meet Dulles
21 Sep	lunch 2.30 P.M. afterwards	Eden and Lloyd End of S.C.U.A. Conference Lloyd meets Dulles
23 Sep	???	Dispute referred to the Security Council

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The structure of decision making in this period is characterized by three important elements. First, the decision to refer the dispute to the Security Council is taken without a formal meeting of either the Cabinet or even the Egypt Committee. Only Macmillan seems to have been consulted, by telegraph, as he had left for Washington on 21 September in order to attend the yearly meeting of the International Monetary Fund. It is therefore probable that this decision was taken by Eden and Lloyd and Macmillan<sup>1</sup>. Second, the central place of Macmillan is evident. Eden phones him, he meets with Dulles, and is present at the various informal meetings. Third, it appears that British decision makers are seeing the representatives of the American Government independently from the French, probably in an attempt to reach a bilateral agreement first.

### 13.3 Explaining the decision

The decision to refer the matter to the Security Council without American consent can be explained by considerations of domestic politics and by growing British impatience with the attitude of the United States Government. The latter factor appears to have been more relevant to the matter. Both factors, however, are intertwined with processes at the individual and group level.

1. Domestic politics. In September Parliament would return from recess. A small group of British policymakers, such as Eden, Macmillan, Salisbury, and Home, had been

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lloyd's account: '[] it became clear to the Prime Minister and myself that we must act. [] The Prime Minister sent a message to Macmillan [] explaining our reasoning', Lloyd, Suez 1956. A Personal Account, pp. 148-149.



afraid that Parliament would force the Government to promise that no force would be used unless recourse to the United Nations had been taken. They hoped to be able to avoid that by offering the users' association coupled with a strong American commitment. The full Cabinet meeting of 11 September, however, had revealed a severe split as to whether the users' association should be seen as a prelude to force, or as a prelude to going to the U.N.. A small group, consisting of Butler, Kilmuir, Salisbury, and Macmillan, convened after the Cabinet in order to work out the wording of the pledges the Government could make without committing the Government to a U.N. approach, while keeping together hawks and doves within the Conservative Party<sup>2</sup>.

The debate in the House of Commons opened on 12 September with the Government's official announcement of the concept of a users' association. Next day the Labour Party and the Liberal Party asked the Government to go to the United Nations all the same, while the Conservative Party started showing an internal division between those to whom a users' association was too soft an approach and those who showed first doubts as to the principle of using force. A small group of Ministers met on the following day. Butler suggested to give the pledge not to use force without recourse to the United Nations, but the other Ministers present followed Macmillan in his fear that the appearance of climbing down under Socialist pressure would be fatal to the Prime Minister's, and Government's, reputation<sup>3</sup>.

After the debate, at which Eden only just managed not to give such a pledge, domestic trouble was not quite over yet: on 19 September Chief Whip Edward Heath, had told reported to Eden 'a good deal of trouble in the Party' and that the Tory group that was opposed to force even as a last resort, might be large enough to put the Government in a minority position in the House<sup>4</sup>. It is thus not unlikely that the inner group of Ministers felt pressed to give up its hesitancy to going to the United Nations. This does not explain, however, why these politicians felt that they could make this important step without American consent, or even, in spite of American opposition to this plan.

2. Increasing disappointment with the American attitude. News of Dulles's press conference on 13 September had much embarrassed Eden, who had been caught by surprise when Gaitskell was able to make use of it during the Commons debate. Macmillan's remarked that the Prime Minister was 'a little rattled'. This sense of apprehension of the American

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<sup>2</sup> Evidence of this meeting can be traced in Macmillan's diary entry for 13 September 1956, Riding the Storm, p. 125.

<sup>3</sup> Macmillan, Riding the Storm, diary entry 13 September 1956, p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> Macmillan diary entry 20 September, Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 128.

attitude towards the dispute was mounting when the day of the second London Conference was coming closer and Dulles still did not seem willing to commit the United States to making use of the users' association as a tool of keeping pressure on Egypt. Indeed on 20 September William Clark, Eden's press secretary, presented a paper on public opinion to Eden 'which showed that the public felt that the Government which had intended to be warlike was slowly but surely being pacified by Dulles and finally w[oul]d have to go reluctantly to the UN'<sup>5</sup>. At the start of the Conference on 19 September the mood around 10, Downing Street was glum: 'everyone seemed to feel that somehow the Americans were letting us down []. Dulles's speech at the conference cheered the party up a bit: 'then Selwyn [Lloyd] came in [with news of Dulles's speech]. This seemed to restore morale a bit though the odour of defeat is still pretty pervasive'. Next day, Clark saw 'great dangers in the strong anti-Dulles movement which is building up'<sup>6</sup>. The last day of conference, which heralded the foundation of the Suez Canal Users' Association (SCUA), 'was a ghastly day with all the worst expectation turning up. Dulles pulled rug after rug from under us and watered down the Canal Association [] till it was meaningless'<sup>7</sup>.

3. Groupthink. The course of the decision making process, as presented in chart 13.1 above, makes it evident that inner circle of Salisbury, Kilmuir, Butler, Eden, and Macmillan played a central role in coping with threat posed by Parliament. The one thing that had to be avoided was the impression to have given in to the Opposition over the U.N.-issue. At the informal meeting on 13 September just before Eden's wind-up of the debate, Butler had been in favour of meeting the Opposition to a certain extent, but the group's majority thought the entailed loss of prestige a worse consequence than a break-up of the domestic consensus about the Government's policy which had existed until then. Some evidence of groupthink can be observed in the days after the debate. Two days after the debate Eden phoned to Macmillan after having read a letter by Hugh Gaitskell to The Times in which the Opposition Leader complained about the Government's obscure position on the use of force. Eden 'seemed rather concerned', but Macmillan said that he 'felt very relieved that Mr. G[aitskell] should take this

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<sup>5</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 18 September 1956, p. 132. Clark had discussed the report with Sir Norman Brook: 'I really feared [] that we were building up to a disastrous letdown. He [Brook] was glum but emphasized that all was not yet lost, and that force had not yet been abandoned'.

<sup>6</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entries 19 and 20 September 1956, pp. 132-133.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, *ibid.*, entry 21 September 1956, p. 134. Clark added that later 'Pineau came in and seemed almost at the edge of dissolving the Alliance'. Cf. Kilmuir, Political Adventure, p. 271.

line, as it entirely destroyed the argument that P.M. had "climbed down"<sup>8</sup>. This is a clear example of a **common effort to rationalize**, which was to be repeated next day when Eden rang Macmillan once more: 'he seemed a little depressed, so I did my best to cheer him up. We are in a difficult position []. But we must have the courage to play the hand through"<sup>9</sup>. Another example is the effort by Macmillan and Salisbury to put pressure on Dulles before the start of the users' conference. Macmillan and Salisbury thought it 'vital that the Americans should not think that we are weakening, in spite of the Socialist Opposition and the other defeatist elements here'<sup>10</sup>. Both thus stuck to the common assumption that one can persuade the Americans to follow if you give them a firm lead.

3. **The individual factor.** The individual factor constitutes an important element of the decision making process, despite the central role of senior Ministers. First, evidence of the growing impatience with the United States mainly comes from a witness at 10, Downing Street, William Clark. This suggests a crucial role for Eden, even though he must have stayed in close touch with on the one hand Macmillan and Salisbury, who had been talking with Dulles, and on the other hand Lloyd, who represented the United Kingdom at the conference. Most importantly, during the conference Eden started doubting the wisdom of having accepted the idea of a users' association: 'he [Eden] seems to feel that the Users' Association has been a bit of a mistake though if we can make the clause on payment of dues effective, he said, it will be just worthwhile'<sup>11</sup>.

The decision to go to the United Nations despite American opposition was clearly taken without anticipating two weighty consequences. First, it could arouse anger with the Americans. Indeed, Dulles became very angry when he heard of the Anglo-French decision to refer the matter to the Security Council. Actually, Dulles claimed that Eden had promised him not take such a step without coordination with the United States<sup>12</sup>.

Second, it could stir the doubters within the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet, who had considered the users' association as a prelude to negotiations, and who might consider this

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<sup>8</sup> Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 127, diary entry 14 September 1956.

<sup>9</sup> Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, diary entry 16 September 1956, p. 402, emphasis in the original.

<sup>10</sup> Macmillan, diary entry 18 September 1956, Riding the Storm, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 20 September 1956, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> This is what Dulles told Paul-Henri Spaak on 5 October; he added that this had created a bad psychological climate; Paul-Henri Spaak, Combats Inachevés I. De l'indépendance à l'Alliance, Fayard, 1969, p. 238.

sudden rush to the United Nations without consulting the full Cabinet might amount to manipulation by a small inner group. It is significant that Monckton, who had already expressed his worry to Clark that 'PM would use [a] loophole [in the idea of a users' association] to start trouble'<sup>13</sup>, sent his letter to Eden, in which he announced his coming resignation of Minister of Defence, on 24 September, the day after the announcement to refer the matter to the U.N.<sup>14</sup>.

The decision to act independently from the United States was thus furthered by a sense of frustration with American unwillingness to consider the users' association as a tool of curbing Nasser. The urge to go to the U.N. itself was prompted by considerations of domestic politics. In the view of this latter aspect, the individual factor seems to have been relevant as well: first, in judging domestic support, Eden was increasingly interested in getting the Conservative Party united behind him rather than in preserving some kind of national unity. Indeed, he was worried to appear weak and permissive in face of Labour's opposition. Eden's reaction to the news of the strength of the Tory group opposed to force, was one of cognitive closure: 'P.M. seemed [] quite determined. It was 1938 over again, and he could not be a party to it'<sup>15</sup>. Clearly then, in the days of the users' conference, the Munich parallel was in Eden's mind. In the same period, he would not agree to Clark's suggestion of what public opinion would regard as an 'unfair' resort to force, but agreed with the analysis that part of the trouble was the impression that Great Britain was meekly responding to Dulles's delaying tactics<sup>16</sup>. He must therefore have been sensitive to a report by the Tory Party Central Office on opinion polls, that reached in the days of the Commons' debate. The report stressed the attitude of Tory voters. Explaining the loss of support among Conservative voters for the Government's policy, the Party Office's General Director wrote to Eden: '[t]here is not a lot of difference. There is no evidence to show whether the lessening of support is due to a weakening of the Conservative attitude or to increased dissatisfaction that a stronger line has not been taken'<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 14 September 1956, p. 130.

<sup>14</sup> Draft of a letter from Monckton to Eden, final letter sent on 24 September 1956, Monckton Papers, 6(210-211).

<sup>15</sup> Macmillan diary entry 20 September 1956, Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 418.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 20 September 1956, p. 133; that day Clark discussed the paper on public opinion he had handed in on the 18th; 'PM who agreed heartily with it though denouncing the analysis of what people thought as "unfair"'.

<sup>17</sup> PREM 11/1123.

In conclusion, the decision to refer the dispute to the United Nations was taken by a small group of ministers (Eden, Lloyd, and Macmillan) provoked by a growing disappointment with the American attitude towards the users' association. Of the various independent variables only a limited amount of evidence of the existence of groupthink can be traced. Considerations of domestic politics seem to have favoured the decision to refer the dispute to the United Nations.

## Chapter 14: Decision 5: Accepting the Challe-plan

### 14.1 The dilemma

At the beginning of October British policymakers were facing a complicated situation: a negotiated settlement seemed possible, but would not reduce Egyptian influence in the Middle East; the users' association might be a means to put pressure on Egypt in the future, but the United States were very reluctant to consider it as a policy instrument; some policymakers wanted to get rid of Nasser, but their formal objective of international control over the Canal made military action unlikely, if a settlement could be negotiated at the United Nations. In the first week of October, it thus looked as if the users' association could not be presented as a victory over Egypt, Nasser would appear to 'get away with it'.

On 25 October the British Cabinet decided to agree to an occupation of the Suez Canal Zone in case a conflict between Israel and Egypt were to occur. It is puzzling to see that the British Government decided to accept the far from remote possibility of war against Egypt when at the same time reasonably satisfactory negotiations between Egypt, France and Great Britain had been conducted at the United Nations. I will show that this decision should be explained by individual and small group variables, as one of its preconditions has been a significant change in the perception of the American attitude by British decisionmakers, furthered by Eden's handling of the of the decision making process.

### 14.2 The structure of decision

A look at chart 14.1, which gives an outline of the decision making process relevant to decision 5, makes it clear that the

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**Chart 14.1: Decision making structure of decision 5**

24 Sep ???	Letter Monckton to Eden announcing probable resignation
25 Sep morning	Eden meets the Chiefs of Staff
11.00 A.M.	Egypt Committee
3.00 P.M.	Eden and Lloyd meet
26 Sep ????	Eden and Lloyd meet
10.30 A.M.	Cabinet
27 Sep	Monckton drafts resignation letter

01 Oct	???	Admiral Barjot meets Dickson
	12.15 A.M.	Meeting Eden, Monckton, and Dickson
	02.30 P.M.	Egypt Committee
02 Oct	until lunch-time	Eden meets Macmillan
03 Oct	???	Monckton resigns formally
	10.45 A.M.	Cabinet
08 Oct	07.00 P.M.	Egypt Committee
09 Oct	11.00 A.M.	Cabinet
10 Oct	???	Informal meeting with at least Monckton present
	noon	Egypt Committee
11 Oct	???	Staff conference Monckton, Head, Eden, and Kirkpatrick
	???	Meeting Eden, Monckton, and Watkinson
13 Oct		Conservative Party Conference at Llandudno
14 Oct	???	Challe and Gazier meet Eden and Nutting at Chequers
16 Oct	11.15 A.M.	Lloyd meets Nutting
	12.15 A.M.	Ministerial meeting with at least Kilmuir, Thorneycroft, Head, Monckton, Lloyd, Nutting, and Eden
	04.00 P.M.	Eden and Lloyd take off for Paris
17 Oct	???	Eden meets several ministers individually
	02.30 P.M.	Eden and Lloyd at #10
	04.00 P.M. <sup>1</sup>	Egypt Committee
18 Oct	11.30 A.M.	Cabinet
	???	Lloyd lunches with Monckton
19 Oct	11.30 A.M.	Lloyd and Eden meet at #10
	???	Lloyd lunches at Buckingham Palace
	02.45 P.M.	Lloyd at #10
21 Oct	???	Meeting at Chequers: Butler, Macmillan, Head, Kilmuir, Brook, Lloyd, Eden, Powell, and Keightley
	afterwards	Lloyd leaves for Paris
22 Oct		Secret Anglo-French-Israeli talks at Sèvres near Paris.

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd's diary of engagements reads: Egypt Committee at 3 P.M., Defence Committee at 4 P.M..

23 Oct	morning	Lloyd meets Nutting
	10.00 A.M.	Meeting of Senior Ministers
	11.00 A.M.	Cabinet
	07.30 P.M.	Pineau arrives in London
	08.30 P.M.	Pineau, Lloyd, and Eden (after dinner) at 1, Downing Street (Foreign Office)
24 Oct	10.00 A.M.	Lloyd meets Patrick Dean
	11.00 A.M. <sup>2</sup>	Cabinet
	04.00 P.M.	Meeting in the Prime Minister's room
	10.30 P.M.	Dean and Logan return from Sèvres
	11.00 P.M.	Meeting of Senior Ministers at #10: Eden, Butler, Macmillan, Head, Mountbatten
25 Oct	10.00 A.M.	Cabinet
	05.45 P.M.	Meeting at #10
	06.15 P.M.	Meeting at #10
	08.15 P.M.	Lloyd (at dinner) called upon by Dean and Logan

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the most important development that occurred is the shift of the level of decision making away from the Egypt Committee towards the informal level of meetings of senior Ministers. Note that the day after General Maurice Challe disclosed the plan to intervene as policemen in case of an Israeli-Egyptian war, the Egypt Committee met only once, on 17 October. Moreover, those informal meetings precede, or follow on, Cabinet meetings. It is therefore very likely that these informal meetings were held in order to reach consensus among the most important ministers, before putting the matter before the full Cabinet. In order to better understand the circumstances that led to the decision to intervene in case of an Israeli-Egyptian war, it is useful to make a distinction between the period before Challe's arrival on 14 October and the period afterwards.

#### 14.3 Conditions favourable to the adoption of the 'Challe-plan'

The conditions that favoured the adoption of the 'Challe-plan' had been created by a fundamental change of British perceptions of the American attitude towards the dispute in general, notably because of Dulles's talk of neo-colonialism on 2 October. This change of perception can be noted at both the individual and group-level.

1. The individual factor: operational code and directive leadership. Two important developments set the stage for the adoption of the 'Challe-plan'. First, Eden was growing ever

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<sup>2</sup> CAB 128/30 says 10.00 A.M.



more impatient with American reluctance to use the users' association as a means of pressure against Egypt. Second, at a press conference on 2 October Dulles would accuse France and Great Britain of colonialist practices in their handling of the dispute. Although Eden's formal reaction was rather restraint, the way he presented the matter to his fellow Ministers testifies to the serious impact Dulles's speech must have had.

British correspondence with Dulles on S.C.U.A. was conducted by Eden and Lloyd and later, when Lloyd left for the United Nations at the beginning of October, by Eden and Nutting. Although Eden had been able to report to the Cabinet on 26 September that the United States seemed willing to pay their shipping dues to the new Canal Authority<sup>3</sup>, American reluctance became evident two days later and Anglo-American bickering over the implementation would continue until Israeli forces invaded the Sinai on 29 October. British confusion about the American attitude is evidenced in Lloyd's remark to Eden, after a talk with Dulles and Pineau: 'I have never seen anyone so anxious to denigrate his own child as Dulles with S.C.U.A.'<sup>4</sup>.

Anglo-American differences on the users' association regarded four issues. (1) American reluctance to put pressure on Liberia and Panama to make their ships pay to the users' association. British officials regarded these ships as 'American-controlled'<sup>5</sup>. (2) American hesitancy in considering the payment of shipping dues to SCUA as a tool of bearing pressure on Egypt. It had been agreed that part of the shipping dues would be transferred from SCUA to Egypt for the financing of development projects, but the British Government was very eager to make such money transfers dependent on Egyptian good behaviour. The United States never committed themselves to any percentage of shipping dues that might be used for such purposes<sup>6</sup>. (3) The Americans had indicated that they preferred waiting with payments to SCUA until agreement would have been reached with the Egyptian Government about the 18 Powers' Proposals during the negotiations that were being conducted at the United Nations

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<sup>3</sup> CM(56)67, 29 September 1956; this was confirmed in a letter from the American Embassy in London the next day, see ME(O)(56)60 [Middle East Official Committee], 27 September 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Lloyd (at the United Nations) to Eden, Telegram 847, 13 October 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>5</sup> This was borne out by a memorandum by the Official Middle East Committee that was discussed by the Egypt Committee; EC document EC(56)55, 29 September 1956, PREM 11/1121. Cf. Eden's letter to Butler, sent from Paris where he was having talks with Mollet and Pineau, Telegram 337, 26 September 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Eden to Washington Embassy, Telegram 4608, 5 October 1956, PREM 11/1121; minutes EC(56)33, 8 October 1956, PREM 11/1121; minutes EC(56)34, 10 October 1956; Dulles to Lloyd, 15 October 1956, PREM 11/1121.

as a result of the Anglo-French decision to refer the matter to the Security Council<sup>7</sup>. (4) Finally, the United States were very wary of being identified too closely with SCUA. They thus wavered over participating in the association's administrative body<sup>8</sup>.

By the time Eden was to meet Challe and Gazier, therefore, a feeling of strong disappointment with the American attitude towards the users' association had been built up. The optimism of the end of September, had been replaced with the strong conviction that the United States would not use SCUA as a tool of pressure against Egypt. Even Nutting wrote to Lloyd on 12 October that the Americans were 'deliberately exaggerating the danger of Egypt closing the Canal to ships paying their dues to SCUA []. It is difficult to avoid the impression that the Americans are doing their best to put off this issue [shipping dues] as long as possible'<sup>9</sup>. Final proof of this came three days later when Dulles wrote to Lloyd that SCUA was not meant to be a means of pressure, but 'of practical working cooperation with the Egyptian authorities which would seek to establish de facto international participation in the operation of the Canal'<sup>10</sup>.

The Egypt Committee's opinion of the American attitude over the users' association thus shifted from moderately positive via 'highly unsatisfactory' (29 September) to 'defeating the whole purpose of the SCUA exercise' (8 October)<sup>11</sup>. Although growing dissatisfaction with the Americans can be observed at the level of the Egypt Committee, it should be borne in mind that the Committee depended for their information on Eden and, to a lesser extent, Nutting<sup>12</sup>, who were communicating with Lloyd in New York and coordinating British negotiations with, on the one hand, the Americans on SCUA, and, on the other hand, France, the United States and Egypt on a peaceful settlement.

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<sup>7</sup> Lloyd (at New York) to Eden, Telegram 798, 7 October 1956, PREM 11/1121; Lloyd (at New York) to Foreign Office, Telegram 816, 10 October 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>8</sup> On 9 October there had been a meeting of SCUA's executive group. It appeared that the United States wanted to participate in the management of 'administrative funds' only, and not of shipping dues; FO to Washington Embassy, Telegram 1092, 9 October 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>9</sup> Nutting to Lloyd (at the United Nations, New York), Telegram 1160, 12 October 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>10</sup> Dulles to Lloyd, 15 October 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>11</sup> EC(56)55 memo, 29 September 1956; EC(56)33 minutes, 8 October 1956.

<sup>12</sup> On 8 October Eden was not present at that day's EC meeting; he probably was in hospital with high fever. All information regarding SCUA and negotiations at the UN must have come from Nutting who replaced Lloyd. Nutting was present on 10 October as well.

On 2 October Dulles held a press conference in Washington that would have an enormous impact on the decision making process in Great Britain. He told journalists that 'there is talk about teeth being pulled out of the plan [SCUA], but I know of no teeth in it, so far as I am aware'<sup>13</sup>. Moreover, Dulles compared the Anglo-French attitude with colonialism by stating that the United States could not always be expected to identify automatically with either so-called colonial powers or independence-seeking nations<sup>14</sup>. The effect of these words was that Eden felt completely let down: apparently he told Nutting: 'Now what have you got to say for your American friends...!'<sup>15</sup>. Clark, meeting Macmillan at 11, Downing Street, was summoned to see Eden: 'He was bitter about Dulles's press conference in which JFD seems to have accused us of "colonialism" over Suez- however, we agreed to say nothing publicly []'<sup>16</sup>. Indeed, Eden sent messages to both the British Embassy in Washington and to Lloyd at the United Nations reassuring that 'Mr. Dulles knows that not one of us would ever want to make difficulties over Anglo-American relations'<sup>17</sup>.

Much more importantly, however, Eden decided to have Dulles's speech passed from hand to hand round the table at the full Cabinet meeting next day<sup>18</sup>, a clear example of structuring the decision making process and influencing his colleagues' opinion on the American attitude<sup>19</sup>. Eden denied Roger Makins's claim of 4 October that the colonialist theme 'is common to so many Americans, [and] welling up inside Foster [Dulles] like lava in a dormant volcano', and was outraged by an article, enclosed by Makins, which suggested that Dulles's policy amounted to no more than simply trying not to wreck American relations with

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<sup>13</sup> The Times, 3 October 1956, quoted by Thomas, The Suez Affair, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Eden, Full Circle, pp. 498-499.

<sup>15</sup> Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 425; at this place Horne quotes from the original manuscript of Nutting's No End of a Lesson, which apparently had been purged at the request of the Cabinet Office, cf. Horne's remark on p. 493, note 8.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 2 October 1956, p. 137.

<sup>17</sup> Eden to Washington Embassy; Eden to New York, 3 October 1956, PREM 11/1174. This was probably in response to the Embassy's report that Dulles had said 'how very unhappy he was about the Press conference yesterday [] "a really bad blunder"', Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 2052, 3 October 1956, PREM 11/1174.

<sup>18</sup> Nutting, allegedly purged paragraph from No End of a Lesson, quoted by Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 426.

<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Butler thought Dulles's speech 'preposterous'; The Art of the Possible, p. 191.

Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Portugal. Eden thought the article 'describes the most dishonest policy I ever read'<sup>20</sup>.

Clearly, then, Eden was enraged by Dulles's remarks, despite his restraint official reaction. This is clear from the change of tone in his messages to Lloyd, who was present at the negotiations at the United Nations in New York. On 6 October Eden wrote to Lloyd: 'I think we must never forget that Dulles's purpose is different from ours. The Canal is in no sense vital to the United States and his game is to string us until Polling Day'<sup>21</sup>. Two days later Eden feared that 'our position is being eroded []. We have been misled so often by Dulles's ideas that we cannot afford to risk another misunderstanding. That is why a negotiating committee [Dulles's latest diplomatic move] would be so dangerous. We should lose control of the situation and justifiably be accused by the French of betraying them. Time is not on our side in this matter []'<sup>22</sup>.

In terms of his operational code, Eden's changing attitude towards American policies, at least those formulated by Dulles, could be explained by Dulles surpassing a certain threshold: at the beginning of October Eden must have felt that Dulles could be relied upon no longer. Having suggested so regularly that American aims coincided with British objectives, and never having excluded force as a last resort, while having obstructed British policies so often, Dulles may have driven Eden to the conclusion that he should no longer have a strong confidence in Dulles's diplomatic moves.

2. Groupthink. The first weeks after the adoption of the idea of a users' association display three instances of phenomena that occur at the group level. First, the initial optimism over the American attitude (until Dulles's devastating press conference) should be explained by over-optimism within the inner circle. Re-assurance about the American position came from Macmillan who was attending the yearly conference of the International Monetary Fund in Washington<sup>23</sup>. Both he and Ambassador Makins saw President Eisenhower in private. Makins

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<sup>20</sup> Makins wrote the memo 'secret and personal' on 4 October; he included an article of that day's *Washington Post*, 'Colonialism Headache. Dulles' Suez Remark A Freudian Slip?', which Eden read and commented on 5 October; PREM 11/1174.

<sup>21</sup> Eden to Lloyd (at United Nations), Telegram 1063, 6 October 1956, FO 800/741.

<sup>22</sup> Eden to Lloyd (at United Nations), Telegram 1978, 8 October 1956, FO 800/741.

<sup>23</sup> Macmillan sent his impressions of these conversations to Eden (preserved in the PREM files). Some the most important telegrams (Nos. 2000, 2001, 2002) can be found in the files of Anthony Head, Secretary of State for War (WO 32/16709). The most crucial telegrams (Nos. 2003 and 2004), which gave an account of Macmillan's private conversations with Dulles and Eisenhower can be found in the files of Eden (PREM) and Lloyd (FO 800/740). This suggests that discussions of the exact nature of the American attitude were confined to narrow circle.

recalls that he was 'amazed' by their conversation: '[ ] I was expecting Harold to make a statement, say something important on Suez-but in fact he said nothing. I was very much surprised. Nor did Ike say anything'<sup>24</sup>. Macmillan, however, felt confident enough to report to Eden that 'I feel sure the President understands our problems about N[asser], but he is, of course, in the same position now as we were in May 1955 [election]'<sup>25</sup>.

In terms of symptoms of groupthink, Macmillan may have fallen prey to self-censorship of personal doubts: he did not have the courage to risk a negative reply from Eisenhower, and thus did not bring up the issue. The fact that Eisenhower did not either, coupled with the fact that Macmillan and Makins were ushered in and out through a sidedoor in order to avoid the press, and that the talk lasted some 35 minutes, must have reinforced Macmillan's perception that a difference existed between American public and private utterances. Similarly, Macmillan reported on two different meetings with Dulles, one official, the other private. About the latter he wrote to Eden that 'some of the things he said were very helpful, but might be dangerous to him if they got about in the electioneering atmosphere'<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, Macmillan once more reassured Eden that American objectives coincided with British aims: 'the American Government was prepared to do everything it could to bring Nasser down'<sup>27</sup>. On his return to London, Macmillan had a long talk with Eden, and afterwards, Eden picked up his correspondence with Eisenhower, and sent him a letter in which he argued that Nasser was 'now effectively in Russian hands, just as Mussolini was in Hitler's. It would be as ineffective to show weakness to Nasser now in order to placate him as it was to show weakness to Mussolini'<sup>28</sup>. Dulles's press conference next day was to change the mood considerably.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Lord Sherfield (Roger Makins) by Alistair Horne; Horne, Macmillan, 1984-1956, p. 421.

<sup>25</sup> Macmillan to Eden, Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 2004, 25 September 1956, FO 800/740.

<sup>26</sup> Macmillan to Eden, Washington to Foreign Office, Telegram 2003, 25 September 1956, FO 800/740. In the same telegram Macmillan displayed a peculiar way of reasoning: 'He [Dulles] tried to get me to say as Chancellor that the economic dangers of a reaction by Nasser to this American decision [paying dues to SCUA] might be very serious. I did not think it necessary to argue this point for I did not wish to be drawn in to a discussion of what our reaction would be if Nasser refused passage to our ships'. Clearly then, Macmillan did not even wish to risk hearing a negative American reply.

<sup>27</sup> Macmillan to Eden, Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 2001, 25 September 1956, PREM 11/1121.

<sup>28</sup> Eden to Eisenhower, 1 October 1956, FO 800/726.

Its impact was felt at the Cabinet's meeting of 3 October. It was concluded that the British position was weakened because of Dulles's statement<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, at the Egypt Committee's meeting of 8 October, Nutting expressed the fear that United States might not want to be involved in a SCUA scheme that was designed to put pressure on Egypt<sup>30</sup>. It can therefore be concluded that between late September and half October a definite change had occurred at least the level of the inner circle, and probably at the level of both the Cabinet and the Egypt Committee as well, in the estimation of the American attitude towards the users' association. Dulles's press conference had the impact of reducing British confidence that they could put confidence in forthcoming American support in cutting Nasser down to size.

3. The bureaucratic variable. Just as in the preceding period, the political decision making process in the end of September and the beginning of October was conditioned by the military's view of the preferable conditions under which an operation against Egypt could be mounted. At the beginning of October the Chiefs of Staff issued the order to draw up a so-called Winter-plan<sup>31</sup>. The aim was to reduce the state of readiness of the forces, which had been ready to initiate an invasion from early September. The new plan envisaged the troops to be ready to fight at 10 days' notice.

The change of plan had occurred because the military judged that it would become difficult to keep the troops in a state of readiness for a long period of time. Moreover, it was thought that meteorological conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean were likely to worsen towards the end of October, so that a different type of operation might be required<sup>32</sup>. On 12 October Headquarters issued the new Winter-plan'. Four days later, Monckton wrote a memorandum for use in the Egypt Committee the following day in which he observed that 'it now seems probable that military operations against Egypt will not be required in the

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<sup>29</sup> CM(56)68, 3 October 1956.

<sup>30</sup> EC(56)33, 8 October 1956.

<sup>31</sup> Love traces the decision back to 6 October; Beaufre mentions 2 October; Kennett Love, Suez: The Twice-Fought War, New York, 1969, p. 459; General André Beaufre, The Suez Expedition, New York, 1969, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> The meteorological argument had occurred several times at the end of September: the French had used it as an argument to persuade the British to launch the attack as soon as possible. Eden thought these considerations were incorrect. Eden reported this from Paris, where he had flown to on 26 September in order to persuade Mollet, Pineau, and Bourguès-Manoury to try to make SCUA a tool of putting pressure on Egypt. The French 'alleged that the weather would preclude it [an attack] later. I contested this'; Eden to Butler, Paris Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 337, 26 September 1956, WO 32/16709. At the same time, the Chiefs of Staff argued the same, but not because they were eager to precipitate a military move.

immediate future, but that there will be further negotiations which may well be protracted'. Monckton, therefore suggested that, following a more relaxed state of readiness of the forces as suggested in the Winter-plan, it would be advisable to release some ships that had been used to carry troops and return them to the merchant fleet<sup>33</sup>.

Clearly then, British decisionmakers were confronted with the military's preference to switch to a plan which precluded a quick decision to go in and which might be interpreted by the outer world as a sign of weakening of British resolve to 'deal with Egypt'. By the time that Gazier and Challe arrived in Great Britain on 14 October, therefore, British decisionmakers faced (1) American reluctance to 'put teeth' into the users' association, (2) uncertainty about the question whether the negotiations at the United Nations could be presented as a clear defeat of Nasser, and (3) increasing difficulties in implementing military plans, as time elapsed.

#### 14.4 The Challe-plan

Much has been written about the exact moment at which Anglo-French cooperation with Israel started. Some claim that Eden and Lloyd were informed of, and did not object to, French-Israeli plans as early as 23 September, when Pineau visited London<sup>34</sup>. Horne suggests that Eden told the Cabinet as early as 3 October that Israel might be willing to help out France and Great Britain<sup>35</sup>. This, of course, is not the relevant question, for the Israeli attitude towards the crisis had been part of British discussions from early August on<sup>36</sup>. The really important question, therefore, is not when collusion started, but why British decisionmakers, Eden in the first place, were prepared to accept a plan that involved Israeli operations, and thus accepted the risk of long-term damage to British relations with the Arab world.

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<sup>33</sup> EC memorandum EC(56)60, 16 October 1956, PREM 11/1103.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., Terence Robertson, Crisis. The Inside Story of the Suez Conspiracy, Hutchinson, London, 1964, p. 134.

<sup>35</sup> Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, pp. 422-430; Horne does not mention any sources to which this date can be traced back.

<sup>36</sup> In military planning it had always been taken into consideration that Israel might take advantage of an Anglo-French operation and make a move to secure the Straits of Tiran. Macmillan had even presented a memorandum to the Egypt Committee in which he urged to take advantage of 'noise' that could be made by Israel so that a considerable amount of Egyptian forces would be tied up in the Sinai, unable to defend Alexandria or the Canal Zone. Eden, however, had always wanted to keep Israel out of the picture, because he did not want Great Britain to be seen lined up with Israel against an Arab country; this would do irreparable harm to the basically pro-Arab foreign policy of the United Kingdom.

Contacts between France and Israel had been established as early as 22 June 1956, when top officials of the Army and Ministry of Defence of both countries met to discuss the coordination of an anti-Nasser policy. In the second half of September an Israeli 'high level' delegation flew to Paris and met with Pineau, Bourgès-Manoury and General Ely in order to coordinate a joint French-Israeli operation against Egypt. Bourgès-Manoury had obtained Cabinet approval of such a move on 19 September<sup>37</sup>. On 8 October Bourgès-Manoury asked Ely to study the possibility of a French-Israeli intervention. This plan was eventually produced by General Maurice Challe who flew to New York to discuss it with Pineau. The French Foreign Secretary showed remarkable enthusiasm and, so as to avoid the Quai d'Orsay, sent Challe to London, accompanied by Acting Foreign Secretary Albert Gazier, to consult Eden<sup>38</sup>. Eden and Nutting received Challe and Gazier at Chequers on 14 October. Challe pointed out his plan of Anglo-French military intervention in case of an Israeli attack on Egypt and subsequent threat to the Suez Canal<sup>39</sup>. Eden said he would have to discuss the matter with the Cabinet. The sequence of events has become well-known since<sup>40</sup>.

On 16 October Lloyd, at Eden's request, returned from New York in order to participate at a meeting of senior ministers. It was decided that Eden and Lloyd should fly to Paris that afternoon to have talks with Mollet and Pineau. Next the Egypt Committee approved of the Challe-plan in principle, followed by the full Cabinet next morning. On 21 October Israel had indicated that it had wanted to discuss the exact terms of agreement with Great Britain and France. Lloyd went to Sèvres, near Paris, to meet with representatives of France

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<sup>37</sup> Michel Bar-Zohar, Ben Gourion, 1986 (édition originale 1978), pp. 345-350; Bar-Zohar makes extensive use of Jacob Tsur, Prélude à Suez, Presses de la Cité, Paris, 1968. Tsur was Israel's Ambassador to France in 1956.

<sup>38</sup> Paul Ely, Mémoires. ii. Suez...le 13 mai, Plon, 1969, pp. 132-135. This course of events may explain Pineau's behaviour at the negotiation in New York. In Lloyd's personal papers at the Public Record Office one can find minutes he wrote to himself in October 1956. On 15 October he notes that Pineau, who until then had been most stubborn and inflexible towards the negotiations up to the point of obstructing them, became incredibly cooperative on the last day. This might be explained by the fact that Challe and Gazier had met a rather enthusiastic Eden; FO 800/725, 15 October 1956.

<sup>39</sup> Maurice Challe, Notre Révolte, Paris, 1968, pp. 26-27; Nutting, No End of a Lesson, p. 95.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Neff, Warriors at Suez, pp. 337-348; Geoffrey Warner, '"Collusion" and the Suez Crisis of 1956', International Affairs, April 1989, pp. 226-239; Anthony Adamthwaite, 'Suez Revisited', International Affairs, (64), 3, 1988, pp. 449-464; Mordechai Bar-On, 'David Ben-Gurion and the Sèvres Collusion', in Louis and Owen (eds.), Suez 1956. The Crisis and its Consequences, Clarendon, Oxford, 1989 (1991), pp. 145-160.



and Israel. On 23 October, due to British and Israeli reservations as to these details<sup>41</sup>, it looked as if the deal was off; indeed, that day the Cabinet was told that it now looked unlikely that an Israeli attack on Egypt was imminent<sup>42</sup>. On 24 October, however, agreement between the three Governments' representatives was reached, and next morning the British Cabinet

'agreed in principle, that, in the event of an Israeli attack on Egypt, the Government should join with the French Government in calling on the two belligerents to stop hostilities and withdraw their forces to a distance of ten miles from the Canal; and should warn both belligerents that, if either or both of them failed to undertake within twelve hours to comply with these requirements, British and French forces would intervene in order to enforce compliance'<sup>43</sup>.

The die was cast.

1. Groupthink. The Egypt Committee met only once (on 17 October) during the crucial period between the French officials' visit and the Cabinet decision of 25 October. The fact that during those 12 days the Cabinet convened four times and that at least four informal meetings of senior ministers were held, suggests that (1) the Cabinet's approval of a weighty decision was needed, (2) a sense of urgency was felt, and, most importantly, (3) Cabinet meetings were structured by informally reached consensus among senior ministers. What can be said about these informal gatherings ?

1.1 Informal meetings. The first informal meeting took place on 16 October shortly after noon. According to Nutting<sup>44</sup>, those present, besides himself, were Thorneycroft, Head, Monckton, Kilmuir, Eden, and Lloyd, who had returned from New York at 11.15 that

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<sup>41</sup> The fundamental problem was that Great Britain insisted that Israel pose a real threat to the Canal, so that it would really look that France and Great Britain acted as intervening policemen. Israel was reluctant to cooperate as her army would be fighting the Egyptian army alone for 48 to 72 hours before France and Britain would join her. It would thus be exposed to the strong Egyptian air force. Eventually, the Israeli agreed to drop airborne troops near the Mitla Pass, so as to put a threat to the Canal; the French Government agreed to fly two French fighter squadrons to Israel and to have the Israeli Mystère IV planes flown by French pilots; cf. Bar-On, 'David Ben-Gurion and the Sèvres Collusion', pp. 153-155.

<sup>42</sup> CM(56)72, 23 October 1956.

<sup>43</sup> CM(56)74, 25 October 1956.

<sup>44</sup> Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 97-99; Nutting interviewed by Richard Lamb, The Failure of the Eden Government, p. 233.

morning. It is curious that Butler, Salisbury, and Macmillan were absent<sup>45</sup>. The Challe-plan must have been presented frankly to all participants: Lloyd thought 'the idea of our inviting Israel to attack Egypt [] a poor one' (emphasis mine)<sup>46</sup>. Nevertheless, despite his reservations he chose not to express his doubts at the meeting. This can clearly be considered an example of self-censorship. Those who did protest against the plan were Nutting and, less vigorously, Monckton<sup>47</sup>. According to Lloyd, however, the meeting was no more than a 'general discussion of a rather indeterminate nature'. It was decided that Lloyd and Eden should go to Paris to discuss the matter further with Mollet and Pineau<sup>48</sup>. It is not unlikely that the absence of three senior Ministers made it impossible to commit the British Government to the Challe-plan.

A second informal meeting took place at Chequers on 21 October, at which Butler, Macmillan, Head, Kilmuir, Lloyd, and Eden were present, as well as General Keightley, Brook, and Powell. The French Government had indicated that Israeli leaders would be coming to Paris; they thought that a British representative would be needed<sup>49</sup>. At the meeting it was decided that Lloyd should go to Paris the next day, travelling incognito. Clearly then, by 21 October another regular critic, Butler, had accepted the use of force and collusion with Israel.

A third informal meeting was held on 23 October at 10 in the morning, one hour before the full Cabinet would meet. Lloyd describes the meeting as 'in effect the Egypt Committee'<sup>50</sup>, so Eden, Butler, Macmillan, Salisbury, and Home, must have been present. The Foreign Secretary reported of troubles he had encountered in reaching agreement with the French and Israeli. The Cabinet was told no more than that an Israeli attack on Egypt now seemed unlikely, but that the French were unwilling to reach a settlement by compromise. No decision was taken.

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<sup>45</sup> There is something odd about Nutting's account: why would he be present at such an important gathering when the Foreign Secretary had returned; Nutting had been present at two Egypt Committee meetings, while Lloyd was in New York; Butler was in Scotland accompanying the Queen on a journey, Lamb, *Failure*, pp. 231-232; Butler, *The Art of the Possible*, p. 192.

<sup>46</sup> Lloyd, *ibid.*, p. 166; Lloyd here records his thoughts of the morning of 16 October.

<sup>47</sup> Nutting in a conversation with Lamb, *Failure of the Eden Government*, p. 233.

<sup>48</sup> see footnote 250.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Powell, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence; Lloyd, *Suez 1956. A Personal Account*, p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> Lloyd, *ibid.*, p. 185.

A fourth informal meeting was held in the evening of 24 October. Patrick Dean, instructed that morning by Eden to go to Sèvres accompanied by Donald Logan, reported of his negotiations with the French and Israeli to a meeting of senior ministers at 10, Downing Street. They included Eden, Butler, Lloyd, Macmillan, Head, and the First Sea Lord, Mountbatten. Lloyd remarks that it was decided to 'recommend the contingency plan to the full Cabinet'<sup>51</sup>. The Cabinet minutes of next morning's meeting indeed suggest that the plan was proposed by Eden as a contingency plan. However, as Dean must have reported that Israel now agreed to pose a threat to the Canal in exchange for Anglo-French protection against the Egyptian air force, the informal meeting must have agreed to present it to the Cabinet in that way. This implies that another self-proclaimed critic, Mountbatten, must have decided not to speak up against it.

Very little is known about the considerations that were put forward at these informal meetings. It seems very probable, however, that the meetings of 21, 23, and 24 October must have dealt with the exact terms of the agreement with France and Israel. If not, Eden would not have been able to present to the Cabinet of 25 October the plan of confronting Israel and Egypt with an ultimatum to withdraw their troops at a distance of 10 miles from the Suez Canal. One can only guess the nature of the discussions, but some clues might be found in the records of the four Cabinet meetings between 18 and 25 October.

1.2 Cabinet meetings. The full Cabinet met on 18, 23, 24, and 25 October. In order to reconstruct the decision making process regarding decision 5, I will first discuss the decision structure of each meeting, and, next, which factors may have played a role.

1.2.1 Decision structure. The Cabinet meeting on 18 October followed a curious order: first, Lloyd reported that negotiations at the United Nations might eventually lead to a satisfactory settlement; then Eden told the Cabinet that Israel might make a military move soon against either Jordan or Egypt. Eden said that 'it would be far better from our point of view that they should attack Egypt; and he had reason to believe that, if they made a military move, it would be made in that direction'. He had even 'therefore thought it right to make it known to the Israelis, through the French' that the United Kingdom would not defend Egypt under the 1950 Tripartite Declaration<sup>52</sup>. Raising the question of what should be done in such

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<sup>51</sup> Lloyd, *ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>52</sup> According to Lloyd's personal notes, Eden asked the Cabinet whether they agreed that no obligation existed to defend Egypt against an Israeli attack: 'there was no adverse comment'; FO 800/828, 18 October 1956.

a situation, Eden suggested that fighting over the Canal should be avoided<sup>53</sup>. Significantly, 'he said he had discussed this with some of his senior colleagues and they had agreed to this view. No one in the Cabinet disagreed'<sup>54</sup>. Clearly then, Eden made a successful attempt at carrying the full Cabinet and at avoiding a detailed discussion of the plan's advantages and disadvantages by confronting his ministers with consensus among his senior ministers.

On 23 October Eden structured the discussion with his opening: considering that an Israeli attack on Egypt now seemed less probable, he sketched a choice between an early attack and prolonged negotiations before the Cabinet: the latter possibility ran the risk of a slowly weakening of the British bargaining position because, following the Winter Plan, military preparations would have to be relaxed. When, in the discussion that followed, it was conceded that the Egyptians were willing to continue negotiations, Selwyn Lloyd spoke up and said that the French were unwilling to fully co-operate to reach a diplomatic settlement, and added no settlement was likely that would diminish Nasser's influence throughout the Middle East. It therefore seems that Eden and Lloyd prepared the Cabinet to accept the use of force even without an Israeli attack on Egypt.

This suggestion came up the very next day, 24 October, when Eden and Lloyd reported of Pineau's visit to London. Eden told the Cabinet that the French Government preferred early military action, but saw no sufficient grounds to embark on such an operation at the present time. Secondly, he informed them that the troops 'could not be held in readiness for many days longer', and that adoption of the Winter Plan weakened the British bargaining position. What followed was an open discussion of the objectives of such an operation, and the reaction of the Arab world. Eden explicitly intervened in this debate, by stating 'we should never have a better pretext for intervention against him [Nasser] than we had now as a result of his seizure of the Suez Canal'. Both the effect on the Arab world and the international community would be limited if the operation were 'swift and successful'. The Cabinet then considered the possibility to bring the issue to a head by issuing an ultimatum to Nasser to comply with the Eighteen Powers Proposals. No final decision would be taken, however, until the French Government's attitude would be fully known.

Next day, on 25 October, Eden and Lloyd determined the decision structure: Eden told the Cabinet that an Israeli attack on Egypt had now become very likely, and next

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<sup>53</sup> This is known from Lloyd's personal record of the discussion. The official Cabinet minutes do not even record this issue being brought up and simply record that the Cabinet took note of Lloyd's and Eden's report of their conversations with Pineau and Mollet in Paris on 16 October; FO 800/728, 18 October 1956; CM(56)71, 18 October 1956; cf. Lamb, *Failure*, p. 236.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

presented Challe's proposal to intervene if either party were to refuse to withdraw at 10 miles from the Canal. He even anticipated the risk of being accused of collusion, but thought this inevitable because Israel was likely to take advantage of any future Anglo-French intervention. Next Lloyd spoke up, supporting Eden's analysis, adding that Egypt had stepped up its attempts at undermining British influence in the Middle East. Only then did the Cabinet discuss the situation, and even in that discussion Eden seems to have played a dominating role in claiming that 'our action would be defensible in international law' and that military action now would be more effective than at some later moment. In the discussion it was put forward that Anglo-American relations might suffer lasting damage, that it must look rather odd to ask Israel to remain at 10 miles from the Canal and thus allow her to occupy Egyptian territory, and France and the United Kingdom did not have any 'specific authority of the United Nations' separating the fighting parties. Nevertheless, the Challe-plan was adopted<sup>55</sup>.

Clearly then, discussions were dominated by Eden and a loyal Lloyd. Two meetings probably did not even involve a full discussion, but should rather be characterized as gatherings at which information about recent developments was given. At the meeting of 18 October this must have led to the acceptance of the Challe plan in principle, without a formal decision being recorded. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that these dynamics pertain to the conclusion that Eden imposed 'his war' on the Cabinet. For one thing, the decision of 18 October was the result of consensus previously reached among senior Ministers. Eden used that argument to carry the whole Cabinet. Moreover, all three remaining Cabinet meetings were coordinated by parallel informal meetings of senior Ministers at which the details of the negotiations with France and Israel were agreed upon. It can thus be safely concluded that collusion with Israel was based on broad consensus among those Cabinet members that really mattered. On the other hand, it is evident that the Cabinet decision making process was structured in such away that the two persons who carried most information, and presumably authority, regarding international developments led the discussions at the Cabinet meetings. At two meetings at least, at one of which an important decision was taken in principle (18 October) the role of the chairman has been decisive: Eden structured the debate by not leaving room for an exhaustive analysis of the issue, and deferring final decisions to later sessions.

Of course, one wonders whether any symptoms of groupthink can be observed. First, the remarkable amount of consensus, both at informal and at the Cabinet level, points to the

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<sup>55</sup> Later, Monckton claimed that Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, Head, Sandys, Kilmuir, and Thorneycroft had been strongly in favour of the plan; quoted by James, without reference to a source, *Anthony Eden*, p. 537, footnote; it is not clear, however, to exactly which Cabinet meeting he is referring; all ministers mentioned had been present on 23, 24, and 25 October.

illusion of unanimity. This has been especially relevant on 18 October when Eden swayed the Cabinet by arguing that 'several senior colleagues' had agreed to his suggested line of action. Silence from traditional opponents of force, such as Monckton and Butler, must have given the impression to junior ministers that no line of division existed any longer within the inner cabinet.

This brings us to a second symptom: **self-censorship**. Lloyd has already been observed to have decided not to express his doubts, either at the informal or at the Cabinet meetings. Indeed, he must have acted as a catalyst of raising support for the Challe-plan, because he decided to express serious doubts as to the effectiveness of any diplomatic settlement with Egypt. Another Minister who certainly fell prey to self-censorship was Walter Monckton. He had sent his letter of resignation on 3 October, but had already written to Eden that he was reluctant to leave the Government as '[] I think it would do harm if I went altogether now []'<sup>56</sup>. Significantly, Eden accepted his resignation on 18 October only, when he knew the Challe-plan had been accepted in rough lines, and offered Monckton the post of Paymaster-General<sup>57</sup>. Monckton felt that his resignation deprived him of his usual influence. On 25 October he wrote to Lady Violet Bonham Carter, a persistent anti-Eden campaigner within the Conservative Party establishment, that 'I well understand the line you would wish me to take, but [] I cannot expect to carry the same weight or to have the same intimate knowledge of what is going on as I had before. Acknowledging these difficulties I shall struggle on'<sup>58</sup>. Yet Monckton's struggles on 25 October were limited to pointing out that under the 1950 Tripartite Declaration the United Kingdom was still obliged to assist Egypt against an Israeli attack<sup>59</sup>. Monckton too accepted the Challe-plan. On 18 October Monckton and Lloyd had lunched at Brooks', the Secretary to the Cabinet. Probably then Lloyd told Monckton that he was

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<sup>56</sup> Monckton's letter of resignation can be found in the Monckton papers, 7(249-250), 3 October 1956; quote from a letter sent to Eden on 1 October 1956 (in effect another draft of his resignation letter), Monckton Papers, 7(238), 1 October 1956, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

<sup>57</sup> Eden to Monckton, 18 October 1956, Monckton papers, 7(310-311). At the same time, Anthony Head was appointed Minister of Defence. In his letter to Monckton, Eden did not comment on Monckton's remarks on the Suez dispute at all.

<sup>58</sup> Monckton to Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Monckton Papers, 7(384), 25 October 1956. This was a response to her letter, Monckton papers 7(382-383).

<sup>59</sup> The Cabinet minutes do not attribute any considerations to a single person, apart from those made by Eden, but in his papers Monckton kept a personal minute on the tripartite declaration, which on 23 October he asked his personal secretary to keep available; Monckton Papers, 7(345-347).

'unhappy about the whole thing, but he had decided that he could not stand against it'<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, even though Lloyd and Monckton had their doubts, they preferred not to ventilate them, for reasons of their own, but may thus have furthered the impression to junior ministers that the inner Cabinet was unanimous.

Another groupthink symptom was the occurrence of a **self-appointed mindguard**: Salisbury advised Monckton to leave the Government 'It would be very embarrassing for you if, after having changed offices but stayed in the Government, you were then compelled to resign on a question of principle, which was already above the political horizon when you made your first decision'<sup>61</sup>. The same symptom can be observed in the refusal of both Eden, Lloyd, and Macmillan to meet with Roger Makins, after the latter had returned on 11 October from his post as Ambassador in Washington to take up his new job as Permanent Secretary at the treasury<sup>62</sup>. Makins had been warning against misinterpreting the American attitude throughout the crisis, and would spoil the optimism about bringing the crisis to a head.

Another instance of a self-appointed mindguard may have been the absence of a British Ambassador in Washington until after the Anglo-French intervention: Eden had allowed Makins's successor Harold Caccia to go by sea instead by plane. Although Eden much regretted this afterwards, it must also have been convenient to British policymakers not to have direct lines of communications with the State Department<sup>63</sup>.

The last groupthink symptom that pervades the decision making process since the visit of Challe and Gazier was a **collective effort to rationalize**. What must have appealed to most ministers, and which may have persuaded doubters like Butler, was the suggestion that Great Britain and France would intervene in order to separate the belligerent parties, and thus might appear as policemen, defending international law. Indeed, on 25 October Eden explicitly argued that the proposed plan would be acceptable under international law, 'for we should be

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<sup>60</sup> These words are Clark's record of a conversation over lunch with Monckton on 2 November 1956, 'Whitehall diary', Clark papers, p. 149, entry 2 November 1956.

<sup>61</sup> Salisbury to Monckton, Monckton Papers, 7(226), 28 September 1956. It is only fair to add that Monckton had asked Salisbury for his opinion when they met on 27 September.

<sup>62</sup> Makins in an interview with Alistair Horne; Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 431.

<sup>63</sup> Young (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, entry 22 April 1960, p. 762. This example of a self-appointed mindguard has been found, more by conjecture than by evidence. In the final assessment of the importance of groupthink in chapter 16, I decided not to count this episode as a symptom of groupthink.

intervening to prevent interference with the free flow of traffic through the Canal, which was an international necessity'<sup>64</sup>.

2. The individual variable. It has already been pointed out how the chairman's handling of cabinet meetings affected the decision structure of those gatherings. There are at least two instances at which Eden's behaviour seriously affected the course of events.

(1) Reception of the Challe-plan. Eden, together with Nutting, were the first British policymakers the Challe-plan was put forward to. Eden had been urged by a message from Mollet to meet with Gazier and Challe. According to Nutting, Eden refused to be assisted by anyone from the legal department of the Foreign Office, as this would have been Fitzmaurice who was known as an opponent of the use of force<sup>65</sup>. But much more important was Eden's reaction after Challe's exposition of the plan. Challe recalls him to be have been 'delighted'<sup>66</sup>. Now, taking account of the situation at 15 October, it is not unlikely that the Challe-visit must have been welcome to Eden: the Chiefs of Staff were about to issue the Winter-Plan, which would weaken the Anglo-French bargaining position at the negotiations at the United Nations, while it was getting more evident every day that the American Government was not willing to use SCUA as a tool of pressure on Egypt: it was thus becoming more uncertain every day whether a solution would be found, either diplomatic or military, which would amount to a credible loss of prestige for Egypt. Evidently, the new plan offered a way out of the dilemma.

(2) Reaching consensus among senior ministers. On 18 October Eden told the Cabinet that he reached consensus with several of his senior ministers. We know that at 16 October's informal meeting, Monckton, Lloyd, and Kilmuir had been the only senior ministers present. It is unlikely that Eden would have decided in favour of such a drastic course of action without the consent of at least Macmillan and Salisbury, and probably Home. We know that Eden did not give a full pledge to Mollet and Pineau in Paris on 16 October, and said that he would give a definite answer the next day. This implies that Eden must have consulted his senior Ministers on 17 October, because Lloyd's personal notes tell that a confirmation was sent from London to Paris on 17 October<sup>67</sup>. We know that after Eden and Lloyd's flight to Paris on 16 October,

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<sup>64</sup> CM(56)74, 25 October 1956.

<sup>65</sup> Nutting, No End of a Lesson, pp. 90-94.

<sup>66</sup> Maurice Challe, Notre Révolte, pp. 28-29.

<sup>67</sup> FO 800/728.



Eden 'saw a number of Cabinet colleagues taking the precaution to interview them individually'<sup>68</sup>. This corresponds with Monckton's recollection that he heard of the plan for the first time<sup>69</sup>. Eden's insistence on receiving his colleagues individually probably testifies of his personal preference to go through with the Challe-plan; meeting them separately provided a better opportunity to persuade them to go along with the French plan.

#### 14.5 Conclusions

This discussion of the decision to accept the Challe-plan has revealed that both individual and group variables have played a significant role. It has become evident that Cabinet meetings were structured by the chairman's attitude, and that this structuring had probably been based on a previously reached consensus among senior ministers. The context in which this decision has been taken has been relevant in that the Challe-plan provided for a way out of a probable loss of prestige due to prolonged negotiations without strong American support, and the likelihood that military preparations would have to be relaxed soon. The presentation of the Winter Plan by the Chiefs of Staff suggests that the organizational context conditioned the decision making process.

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<sup>68</sup> Geoffrey McDermott, The Eden Legacy and the Decline of British Diplomacy, Leslie Frewin, London, 1969, p. 148; until the end of August 1956, McDermott was one of three Foreign Office officials who knew of political and operational plans; the other two were Patrick Dean and Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick. Of course, it might be the case that the major decision was prepared during the Egypt Committee's meeting of 17 October at which Home and MacMillan were present.

<sup>69</sup> Monckton in a conversation with William Clark on 2 November; 'Whitehall Diary', Clark papers, entry 2 November 1956, p. 149. This suggests that Lloyd's observation was correct that the meeting of 16 October was of a general nature, and raises doubts about Nutting's account of him and Monckton protesting.

## Chapter 15: Decision 6: Military action despite international and national pressure

### 15.1 The dilemma

After the decision to adopt the Challe-plan one only had to sit back and wait for events to unfurl: after Israel's attack on Egypt on 29 October, which included a drop of parachutists near the Mitla-pass as a token threat to the Canal, Mollet and Pineau flew to London on 30 October. The projected ultimatum was put to both belligerents by the English and French Governments, and the armada started sailing from Malta and Cyprus. Problems arose after a short moment of reprieve, when all seemed to be going as planned: 'the big decisions are over and they [Eden and Lloyd] seem calm and detached'<sup>1</sup>: in the evening of 30 October it became evident that the United States would not support the Anglo-French case at the Security Council. The next surprise was the adoption of the Uniting for Peace Resolution, sponsored by Yugo-Slavia, which undid the effect of the French and British vetoes at the Security Council and transferred the debate to an emergency session of the United Nations' General Assembly.

These unexpected developments confronted British decision makers with an unanticipated contingency: how to resist to international pressure until the Armada would have arrived at Egypt's shores? Only now did one fully realize that it would take the fleet seven very long days to sail to Port Said. On 2 November 1956 the Cabinet decided to continue the operations as planned, but announced that it would welcome a United Nations intervention force in the area. The next day it was decided that the Minister of Defence should go to Cyprus to urge for an earlier drop of French and British airborne troops. Military commanders at Cyprus, however, were against it, because these troops would have to face strong Egyptian resistance while the main assault would not start for another 48 hours.

On 4 November the situation worsened, when Israel seemed willing to comply with the United Nations resolution that called for a cease-fire. This would deprive France and Great Britain from their pretext to intervene in order to protect the Canal. Operations could proceed, only when Israel announced that it would not agree to a cease fire after all, after strong pressure from Mollet on Ben Gurion. On 4 November the British Cabinet decided that parachutists would be dropped the next day, 24 hours earlier than planned, and one day before the main assault.

It will be shown that the British Cabinet was trapped by her decision of 25 October. At that time the Challe-plan seemed an ideal way out of obtaining one's objectives without

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<sup>1</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 30 October 1956, p. 144.

offending the United States and international public opinion too much. When these fundamental assumptions proved incorrect, one faced a painful dilemma: on 4 November it seemed inevitable that remaining loyal to one's pretext implied that no occupation of the Canal Zone could take place at all. The objective of provoking Nasser's downfall seemed further away than ever.

### 15.2 The structure of decision

Before examining this case of entrapment a bit more in detail, it is important to have an impression of the structure of the decision making process. Chart 6 presents an overview of most relevant meetings.

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**Chart 15.1: decision making structure of decision 6**

26 Oct	10.30 A.M.	Lloyd has meeting at 10, Downing Street
	06.45 P.M.	Lloyd has meeting at 10, Downing Street
29 Oct	02.30 P.M.	Meeting at 10, Downing Street: at least Lloyd, Eden, Keightley, Dickson, Templer, Mountbatten
30 Oct	10.15 A.M.	Cabinet
	afterwards	Pineau and Mollet meet Lloyd and Eden at 10, Downing Street
	03.30 P.M.	Defence (Transition) Committee
	10.00 P.M.	Meeting at 10, Downing Street with at least Kilmuir and Eden present, as well as Lloyd; probably Macmillan
31 Oct	09.45 A.M.	D(T)C
	noon	Lloyd meets Monckton
	12.30 P.M.	Cabinet
1 Nov	09.45 A.M.	D(T)C
	10.00 A.M.	Ministerial meeting in Lloyd's room at the House of Commons: Lloyd, Home, Lennox Boyd, Monckton, Kirkpatrick, Burke Trend <sup>2</sup> , Service ministers, and (can be deduced from notes) Head
	02.35 P.M.	Egypt Committee
	03.30 P.M.	Censure motion House of Commons
	04.00 P.M.	'Suez meeting' (Kilmuir [1964: 275])
	10.00 P.M.	3-line whip
	10.45 P.M.	Egypt Committee (lasts until 1.30 A.M.)
2 Nov	09.45 A.M.	D(T)C
	04.30 P.M.	Cabinet

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<sup>2</sup> Later, Baron Trend; Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet.

	06.00 P.M.	Pineau meets Lloyd
	09.30 P.M.	Cabinet (lasts until 2 A.M.)
3 Nov	02.00 P.M.	Egypt Committee (lasts 1 hour)
	10.30 P.M.	Meetings at 10, Downing Street, at least Kilmuir is present (lasts until 2.30 A.M.)
4 Nov	before	Lloyd and Eden at 10, Downing Street
	12.30 P.M.	Egypt Committee (lasts until 1.30 P.M.)
	03.30 P.M.	Egypt Committee <sup>3</sup>
	06.30 P.M.	Cabinet (lasts until 9.30 P.M.)

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Chart 6 allows for several observations. First, foreign policy was conducted from 10, Downing Street rather than from the Foreign Office. This had already been the case since Challe and Gazier's visit at Chequers on 14 October (cf. chart 14.1): Lloyd's diary of engagements demonstrates that much of the Foreign Secretary's time was spent at the Prime Minister's office. This is by itself an indication the strong influence Eden had on the formulating and sending of diplomatic exchanges. Eden's mark should not be exaggerated, however; it is very likely, and sometimes demonstrable, that major messages, such as those to Eisenhower, were cleared by Macmillan.

Second, a relatively large number of meetings of both the Cabinet and Egypt Committee were held. Generally, one could say that the political decisions to go ahead with military operations, and to accept an United Nations emergency force if Anglo-French forces would be part of them, were taken by the Cabinet at 2 and 4 November. Both meetings were preceded, however, by meetings of the Egypt Committee, which each lasted for about three hours. It seems that the Egypt Committee was dealing primarily with the implementation of military strategy, such as the decision of 1 November not to bomb Egyptian oil installations. As soon as politically relevant questions emerged, discussions were transferred to the full Cabinet.

Third, it is difficult to give a reasonable assessment of the amount of informal meetings taking place. The only unequivocal example is the meeting in Lloyd's room at the House of Commons on 1 November. More puzzling are the meetings at 10, Downing Street on 30 October, 3 and 4 November<sup>4</sup>. From various sources it can be deduced that Macmillan and

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<sup>3</sup> Robertson suggests that Pineau and Bourges-Manoury flew to London, and met with 'Eden and the inner cabinet'; they supposedly argued that any further delay of military operations would be fatal; Robertson, *Crisis. Inside the Suez Conspiracy*, p. 230.

<sup>4</sup> Main source is Kilmuir, *Political Adventure*, p. 275.

Lloyd were present on 30 October too<sup>5</sup>. This suggests that throughout this period a small group of ministers was present at 10, Downing Street, or were at least contacted.

### 15.3 Entrapment

In the morning of 30 October the Cabinet agreed unanimously<sup>6</sup> to issue an ultimatum to Egypt and Israel and to consult the French Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. The remaining time was spent discussing the likely attitude of the United States Government. It was generally considered unlikely that the United States would respond to an appeal to support the action that would be taken, it was deemed possible 'to reduce the offence to American public opinion' and not to alienate the U.S. Government 'more than was absolutely necessary'. This was considered indispensable because one expected to have to rely on American economic assistance, as British 'reserves of gold and dollars were [] falling at a dangerously rapid rate'<sup>7</sup>. Although active American support was thus not anticipated, the Cabinet did expect economic assistance; one may therefore deduct that silent American approval with some public noises was expected. This may explain why the entire Cabinet agreed not to support the American proposed Security Council resolution which condemned Israel as an aggressor, thus clearing the way for the first British veto at the Security Council that would be pronounced later that day.

Until late afternoon all seemed to be going according to plan; small wonder that Eden and Lloyd were 'curiously euphoric'<sup>8</sup>. Then, however, news of the American public reaction and the debate at the Security Council came off the tape. Most disturbing was the American attitude at the United Nations, once the news of the Anglo-French ultimatum broke through. The Americans introduced a resolution that called for Israeli withdrawal and which stated that compliance would remove the basis for the Anglo-French ultimatum. At 10 P.M. British Ambassador to the United Nations, Dixon, called Lloyd at 10, Downing Street, and made it

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<sup>5</sup> Clark records that at 9.15 P.M. U.S. Ambassador Aldrich handed over Eisenhower's cool reaction to the Anglo-French ultimatum. The draft reply to Eisenhower, which was sent that evening, shows suggestions by Macmillan. At 10 P.M. Lloyd talked to Pierson Dixon on the phone, British Ambassador to the United Nations. Clearly then, both Lloyd and Macmillan were at 10, Downing Street; Clark, 'Whitehall Diary', entry 30 October 1956, pp. 143-144.

<sup>6</sup> Later that day, Monckton told William Clark that he and Heathcoat Amory had protested against issuing an ultimatum, while Sandys and Lennox-Boyd adopted a most hawklike stand; Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 30 October 1956, p. 142.

<sup>7</sup> CM(56)75, 30 October 1956.

<sup>8</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 30 October 1956, p. 144.

clear that the Americans were 'gunning for us hard', and was afraid he would have to veto<sup>9</sup>. That same evening news came in that Dulles had said that the United States had 'noticed a rapid build-up of our forces in Cyprus [] which had started before the Israeli move'. He considered the ultimatum a 'pretty brutal affair' and added that 'we were facing the destruction of our trust in each other'<sup>10</sup>. At 9.15 P.M. Aldrich delivered a very cool message of Eisenhower. Eden and Macmillan, however, stuck to their curious rationalization of American behaviour, and preferred to separate public and private utterances of Eisenhower's (see chapter 17).

Later that night Yugo-Slavia introduced a Uniting for Peace Resolution which called for an emergency session of the General Assembly. Lloyd was very disappointed that the Americans supported this resolution, because their abstention would have been enough to reject the proposal<sup>11</sup>, which would have given France and Great Britain some breathing space. Now, however, the General Assembly would convene at 10 P.M. on 1 November, and it was evident which side the United States was likely to take in that debate<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, the British veto and the start of the bombing of Egyptian targets by the Royal Air Force on 31 October had caused great turmoil in the House of Commons. Even the Conservative Party was increasingly more divided, as the Whips reported<sup>13</sup>.

In this context one should understand the meeting of Lloyd, Home, Lennox-Boyd, Monckton, Kirkpatrick, and assistant secretary to the Cabinet Trend, as well as the three service ministers in Lloyd's room at the Commons at 10 A.M. on 1 November. At this meeting developments at the United Nations were discussed. Kirkpatrick said that he expected the United Kingdom to leave the United Nations, or to be expelled. The party discussed the possibility of asking the United Nations to continue Anglo-French operations as a peace-

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<sup>9</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 30 October 1956, p. 144; Lloyd answered 'quite cheerfully' that Dixon had to veto indeed.

<sup>10</sup> Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegrams 2205 and 2206, 30 October 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>11</sup> Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, pp. 199-200; invoking the Uniting for peace procedure is a procedural question, the adoption of which required seven votes in favour.

<sup>12</sup> As a matter of fact, Dulles would personally lead to crusade against France and Great Britain at the emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly on 1 and 2 November. He moved a resolution aimed at making Israel and Egypt accept a cease fire so that Anglo-French intervention would become obsolete. This resolution was adopted with 65 votes in favour, 5 against and 6 abstentions.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. James, *Anthony Eden*, pp. 546-547, 558-560.

keeping operation under U.N.-flag and with a U.N.-commander<sup>14</sup>. This idea was presented to the Egypt Committee that evening.

At this point it became clear how much the British Government was trapped in its own pretext. Originally, the Challe-plan had seemed an ideal solution, because France and the United Kingdom would appear to be acting under international law, or at least international morality, and would thus easily solicit the support of public opinion, especially at home, at the United Nations, and in the United States. Moreover, it offered the possibility of reducing the offence to pro-English Arab countries: because Israel was bound to profit from an Anglo-French military attack on Egypt in any case, the Cabinet preferred to be seen as holding the balance between Egypt and Israel rather than as acting together with Israel<sup>15</sup>.

When the Egypt Committee faced an unexpected situation of mounting domestic and international opposition on the evening of 1 November, the solution of transferring the responsibility for the Anglo-French 'police action' to the United Nations seemed the only way out within the type of rationalization that British policymakers had created themselves. By implication, one was losing sight of one's main objective, which was reportedly noticed by the Minister of Defence, Anthony Head. He 'kept on reminding us [committee] that the first objective of this whole operation was to get rid of Nasser; that would never be done by [the] U[nited] N[ations]'<sup>16</sup>. Because it had been decided to use policing as a pretext to achieve its real objective, the British Government was constraint to present its case in form of its chosen justification<sup>17</sup>. The issue of handing over the matter to the United Nations was transferred to the Cabinet meeting next day. Actually, the Cabinet met twice, the interval allowing for a meeting between Pineau and Lloyd (and probably Eden). The Cabinet minutes reveal that real worries existed about the split within the Conservative Party. Hard-liners would consider the transfer of responsibility to the U.N. as an excuse for abandoning an invasion altogether; soft-liners would not understand why an attack on Egypt would be launched, while the U.N. would

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<sup>14</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall Diary', entry 1 November 1956, p. 146; it is unclear whether the meeting was responding to the idea of an United Nations emergency force that had been floated by the Canadian Foreign Secretary Lester Pearson, or whether one came up with the idea independently. One should recall that Home (who was present at this meeting) had already made a similar suggestion at the end of July.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. CM(56)70, 25 October 1956.

<sup>16</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 1 November 1956, p. 146. Clark's source was Walter Monckton.

<sup>17</sup> This explains the efforts to try to maintain strict consistency between pretext and behaviour, such as the Cabinet's decision of 2 November to suspend the export of arms to Israel; CM(56)78, 2 November 1956.

have been invited to take over. To make things worse, Pineau had made it clear that the French would not accept halting the operation, even though U.N.-policing could be discussed. The Cabinet thus decided that it would agree to stop operations if a U.N. force could be constituted and if Anglo-French forces would be part of it<sup>18</sup>.

Meanwhile, the ships' slow speed had made the dilemma ever more pressing: how could one 'get the invasion started before the UN can make it too hot for us'; Eden reportedly kept on repeating that the United Nations was 'our only real danger now'<sup>19</sup>. The French were in a similar hurry. Pineau urged that troops should have landed on Egyptian before the vote in the General Assembly would take place. Pineau and General Ely flew to London to convince the British of swift action. Ely recalls strong hesitation among the British Chiefs of Staff, notably Mountbatten<sup>20</sup>. At the political level<sup>21</sup>, it was decided to advance the drop of airborne troops to 4 November. This met with heavy resistance of the military on 3 November, who thought it military unsound the drop relatively lightly armed troops without an immediate sea-borne landing.

The decision to intervene as policemen who would protect the Suez Canal from an Egyptian-Israeli war constrained the freedom of Anglo-French action in another way. Although at an early stage it had already been decided to try to minimize civilian casualties as much as possible in view of the effect on public opinion, the success of such efforts became all the more pressing, once the policing task had been chosen as a pretext. The Cabinet thus decided to issue a public warning advising to keep clear of all Egyptian airfields, and when news came through that the United States was evacuating its citizens by a road which ran through the Cairo West airfield, a R.A.F. target, it was decided that every effort should be made to postpone the particular attack until evacuation would have been completed<sup>22</sup>. Similarly, Minister of Defence Anthony Head and General Templer were sent to Cyprus on 3 November

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<sup>18</sup> ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Reportedly, Lloyd told Dixon over the phone that 'we can accept anything from the UN so long as it doesn't stop our troops going in'; Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 3 November 1956, p. 149.

<sup>20</sup> Ely, Mémoires. ii. Suez...le 13 Mai, pp. 162-164.

<sup>21</sup> It is not clear at which meeting, but it may well be the early Cabinet meeting of 2 November, the minutes of which are being withheld; on the other hand, the full Cabinet seldom discussed operational military plans. Indirect evidence of this crisis-like decision being taken on 2 November comes from Clark's remark that on 2 November Eden's temperature rose to 105 degrees; Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 4-5 November 1956, p. 158; Bourges-Manoury's contemplation to have the French start the invasion unilaterally, may have added to the rise of temperature, Ely, Mémoires.ii, p. 169.

<sup>22</sup> CM(56)76, 31 October 1956.



to tell the Commanders that damage to civilian objects and civilian casualties had be minimized, and, logical consequence of the policeman pretext, to confine military operations to the Canal zone. This meant that an advance on Cairo was out of the question<sup>23</sup>. Would that be enough to procure Nasser's downfall ?

The ultimate consequence of entrapment in a pretext was faced on 4 November when news came through that Israel and Egypt had accepted the United Nations resolution calling for a cease-fire. This would deprive an Anglo-French invasion of its pretext, because both belligerents posed no longer a threat to the Canal. Faced with this situation, and worried by talk of U.N.-oil sanctions against France and Great Britain, the Cabinet met in the early evening of 4 November<sup>24</sup>. Three courses of action seemed open: (1) go on as planned, accepting a United Nations force if French and British troops would part of it, (2) suspend operations for 24 hours and see whether the U.N. would accept Anglo-French troops as 'an advance guard of the Ultimate United Nations force', (3) stop operations indefinitely. When a formal vote was taken, three ministers favoured the last course, four ministers the second, while twelve were in favour of going on. Eden did not consider this enough, although only Monckton had indicated that he would not accept a majority decision and 'must reserve his position'<sup>25</sup>. A governmental crisis, however, was averted by the news that Israel had decided not to accept the terms of the United Nations Resolution after all. The pretext was restored, and operations could continue.

#### 15.4 Dependent and constraining variables

Two variables seem to have affected the decision making: groupthink and the organizational context; at the same time Eden's directive leadership style had a clear impact.

1. Groupthink. At least four elements can be found in this period of entrapment. First, in the safety of the pretext of a policing operation, several indications of the presence of the illusion of invulnerability among senior ministers and even the full Cabinet can be found. (1) On 30 October, when the Cabinet decided to issue the ultimatum to Egypt and Israel as planned, Eden and Lloyd acted in a 'curiously euphoric' manner<sup>26</sup>; (2) At the Cabinet

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<sup>23</sup> Beaufre, The Suez Expedition, p. 92; Beaufre mentions the evening of 4 November, but Head and Templer flew to Cyprus on 3 November; James, Anthony Eden, pp. 564-565.

<sup>24</sup> CM(56)79, 4 November 1956.

<sup>25</sup> Three different accounts of Eden's disappointment and consequent behaviour exist; cf. Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis, pp. 74-75.

<sup>26</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 30 October 1956, p. 144

meeting of 4 November, when the news broke of Israel's refusal to accept a cease-fire, and thus the pretext was restored, a split in the Cabinet avoided, and operations could proceed, 'tension round the table was immediately relieved'<sup>27</sup>: 'everybody laughed & banged the table with relief -except Birch and Monckton, who looked glum'<sup>28</sup>. (3) A third, but possibly less convincing, element of a feeling of invulnerability can be observed in the fact that in the evening of 5 November, the day of the first landings of French and British parachutists, a sherry party was held at 10, Downing Street<sup>29</sup>.

Second, Home's letter to Eden, written after the crucial 4 November meetings of the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet, shows a **belief in the inherent morality of the group**:

My dear Anthony, The stakes you were playing for yesterday [4 November] were the highest-to lose all or to win all. We are not out of the wood, but we have won a decisive round. If our country rediscovers its soul and inspiration your calm courage will have achieved this miracle. With my unstinted admiration, Yours ever, Alec<sup>30</sup>

Third, pressure was exerted on dissenters. On 1 November already, Monckton told Clark that he had wanted to resign from the Government, which could have had serious consequences for the unity of the Conservative Party. Nevertheless, 'WM [] said he only stayed with the ship at the strong request of the PM []'<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, Monckton's eventual decision to stay on counts as an example of **self-censorship**. All Cabinet decisions on 30 and 31 October, 2 and 4 November were taken unanimously. When Israel appeared to accept a cease-fire on 4 November, Monckton had said he must reserve his position if military operations were not deferred indefinitely. Nevertheless, once it became known that Israel did not accept the U.N.-resolution, Monckton remained silent<sup>32</sup>. His self-censorship surfaces in his letter to the Cabinet after Anglo-French operations had been halted:

'I have remained in the Cabinet without resignation because I have not thought it right to take a step which I was assured would bring the Government down []. I have always felt that in as much as my opinion was not shared by any of

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<sup>27</sup> Butler, The Art of the Possible, p. 193.

<sup>28</sup> Clarissa Eden's diary, quoted by James, Anthony Eden, p. 567.

<sup>29</sup> FO 800/717 (Lloyd's diary of engagements November 1956).

<sup>30</sup> Home to Eden, 5 November 1956, PREM 11/1154, printed in Lamb, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 250.

<sup>31</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 1 November 1956, p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> He may not have had the opportunity to speak up, as 'tension was immediately relieved', and 'tables were banged'.

my colleagues, a certain measure of humility demanded restraint in action on my part. Moreover, I did understand the danger of doing nothing because Nasser was succeeding in undermining our position throughout the Middle East and North Africa []. I have lived on from day to day [] in the hope that I could within the Cabinet contribute towards a settlement as soon as possible'<sup>33</sup>.

The fact that those ministers who favoured stopping altogether (Salisbury, Buchan-Hepburn) or postponement (Butler, Kilmuir and Heathcoat-Amory)<sup>34</sup>, happily joined in the general relief about Israel's refusal to accept a cease-fire testifies of the power of the idea of operating as a policeman. Indeed, it should thus count as a **collective rationalization** of one's behaviour.

Various indications of the occurrence of symptoms of groupthink thus appears at the Cabinet level. The next question, however, must be to which extent the individual variable helps in understanding the structuring of the decision making process.

2. The individual variable: directive leadership. From the records it is very difficult to conclude that Eden, as the chairman, manipulated the discussions of the Cabinet. Especially, the minutes of the 4 November meeting suggest that Eden solicited a thorough discussion of the consequences of the situation that had occurred now Israel seemed willing to abide with a U.N.-resolution. At first, a search for alternative courses of action was held; next, their respective advantages and disadvantages were looked for; only then did Eden invite 'each of his colleagues to indicate his view on the three alternative courses set out []'<sup>35</sup>. He reportedly did not vote himself<sup>36</sup>.

When the Cabinet appeared strongly divided, with two senior Ministers (Kilmuir and Butler) voting in favour of postponement, and one in (Salisbury) favour of stopping, Eden is said to have taken Butler, Macmillan and Salisbury aside and to have told them that 'if they wouldn't go on then he would have to resign'<sup>37</sup>. This clearly qualifies as an individual attempt to direct the decision making process, as these three 'most senior' ministers agreed that in that

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<sup>33</sup> Minute from Monckton to the Cabinet, 7 November 1956; Monckton Papers, 8(39-40).

<sup>34</sup> The votes are identified by James, Anthony Eden, p. 566.

<sup>35</sup> CM(56)79, 4 November 1956.

<sup>36</sup> Lamb, Failure of the Eden Government, p. 260.

<sup>37</sup> Clarissa Eden's diary, quoted by James, Anthony Eden, p. 567; two more accounts exist, one from Butler, who claims Eden said he must go upstairs and reconsider his position; Butler, The Art of the Possible, p. 193; the second reports Eden to have broken down in tears, crying 'You are all deserting me', going upstairs to compose himself; James Margach, The Abuse of Power, London, 1978, p. 113, quoted by Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis, p. 75.

case no-one would be able to form a government<sup>38</sup>. However, it would not be necessary to discuss the consequences of the vote with the full Cabinet, as news broke that Israel would not accept the cease-fire after all; Cabinet unanimity was immediately restored.

3. The organizational context. The presence of group and individual variables at the decision making process notwithstanding, it should not be forgotten that the decision making process itself has been severely constrained by the logistics of the military plan, once the fleet had left Malta, Cyprus and Algiers. It would take the ships 7 days to arrive at Port Said, and a rapid occupation of Port Said by airborne troops was considered highly imprudent by British military planners, because the lightly armed parachutists would not be able to hold out against the Egyptian army, while reinforcements would still be far away at sea. Indeed, at the Egypt Committee meeting of 3 November the Chiefs of Staff argued that because the Israeli advance in the Sinai had caused Egypt to withdraw parts of her troops from the Sinai and redeploy them near the Canal. According to the Chiefs, this implied that Port Said had to be heavily bombed before the Anglo-French assault, which conflicted with the political objective of limiting damage and civilian casualties. Only the next day the original plans could be stuck to, when air reconnaissance had revealed that Egyptian forces were withdrawing towards Cairo. The nature of military planning is not subject of this research. It is therefore sufficient to note that the slow speed of the fleet, coupled with the military's conviction that an early drop of parachutists would be unsound military action, set limits to British decision making<sup>39</sup>.

4. Domestic politics. Little evidence exist of the effect of growing domestic opposition on the decision making process. It seems, however, that British policymakers were worried by a potential division within the Tory Party rather than by the public at large. The risk of a

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<sup>38</sup> Clarissa Eden's diary, footnote 310.

<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, it could be hypothesized that the latter argument may have been used by those military top officials, such as Mountbatten, to try to delay landings as long as possible, in the view of growing international and domestic pressure on the British Government. It should be noted that the French had been advocating an early attack right from the moment discussion at the United Nations had been transferred from the Security Council to the General Assembly. On 2 November General Ely spoke with the British Chiefs of Staff to that effect, while Pineau tried to convince Eden and Lloyd. The French military saw no problem in launching an airborne attack with the ships still far at sea. Now this may be due to the overeagerness of the French military to be victorious after so many years of humiliation, but the hesitancy of the British military, as well as their meticulous planning, and the tendency to stick to it, needs explaining. This suggests two possible hypotheses: (1) the invoking of standard operation procedures for military planning and implementation, (2) deliberate obstruction of the political decision making process; Cf. Alistair Horne, The French Army and Politics, 1870-1970, Peter Bedrick, New York, 1984; Herbet Luethy and David Rodnick, French Motivations in the Suez Crisis, The Institute for International Social Research, Princeton, New Jersey, December 1956.

divided Conservative Party affected the British decision of two November to request the participation of Anglo-French troops in a U. N. emergency force.

#### 15.5 Concluding remarks

The decision to continue operations despite growing international and domestic opposition should thus be understood in terms of the constraining influence of, especially, the organizational context, and, to a lesser extent, domestic politics. The decision itself has been influenced by groupthink: British decisionmakers preferred to stick to the rationalization that the Challe-plan had offered them: the presence of a large number of symptoms of groupthink testifies of their entrapment.

## Chapter 16: The independent variables: Operational Code and Groupthink

### 16.1 Introduction

Discussion of six decisional conflicts aimed, firstly, to make the reader familiar with the complexity of the decision making process during the Suez crisis; secondly, assess the presence of four factors in that process (i.e., the Operational Code, Groupthink, the organizational context, and considerations of domestic politics). However, it is one thing to identify these elements, it is quite another to assess the relative influence of each variable. This concerns groupthink in particular: it is not enough to merely conclude that several symptoms have occurred: it will be necessary, first, to link their occurrence to the phenomenon's antecedent conditions in order to attribute their presence to group processes rather than third variables; and, second, to show that defective decision making resulted.

The basic contention of this chapter is, first, that a small group of British ministers, consisting of Eden, Macmillan, Lloyd, Salisbury, Kilmuir, Home, Monckton (up until a certain moment), and (in a more qualified manner) Butler, fell prey to groupthink in preparing the major decisions in the Egypt Committee, or in informal meetings. Although the Cabinet displays an increasing number of groupthink symptoms as well, as the crisis develops, consensus at the Cabinet level should partly be explained in political terms, that is, by the importance of previous consensus among senior ministers. Second, in several instances Eden's Operational Code adds significantly to explaining the decision making process. Third, I will show how Eden, as leader of the small group, fulfilled the crucial function of establishing a link between the Operational Code and the Groupthink phenomenon. I shall also argue that organizational and domestic variables operated as constraining variables that to a certain extent moderated the impact of the independent variables.

### 16.2 The independent variables

A summary of the structure of the decision making process makes it clear that during the development of the Suez crisis, the Egypt Committee became increasingly less and less used as unit of decision making, while the number of informal meetings, defined as meetings at which three or more senior ministers were present<sup>1</sup>, steadily expanded. Table 16.1 presents

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<sup>1</sup> The reader should be aware of two caveats: first of all, many informal meetings have been recorded, and have been mentioned in the charts of chapters 10-15, between two ministers. Many of those include Eden and Macmillan, Macmillan and Salisbury, Eden and Lloyd, and Macmillan and Lloyd, giving more credit to the existence of the presence of a small inner circle. Secondly, I do not claim to have given an exhaustive account of all informal meetings; those I have presented can be found by the close reading of accounts, memoirs, diaries, and by studying the official records.



Table 16.1 (continued)

	September														October												
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
DTC	x				x																						
EC	x			x								x						x						x			x
CAB	x												x							x					x		
INF				x						x																	x

	October																					November					
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
DTC																				x	x	x	x			x	x
EC							x															2			2		
CAB								x					x	x	x					x	x		2		x		x
INF	x					x					x		x	x						x		x					



the frequency of meetings of four decision making units (Egypt Committee, Cabinet, Informal Group, and Defence (Transition) Committee) throughout the crisis.

Table 16.2 gives an overview of the number of meetings of these decision making units related to the period of each decisional conflict:

**Table 16.2: number of meetings of decision making units per decisional conflict**

	Informal	Egypt Comm	Cabinet	D(T)C
Decision 1	1	9	3	2
Decision 2	2	9	3	6
Decision 3	1	8	4	4
Decision 4	4	4	1	2
Decision 5	6	5	5	-
Decision 6	4	5	5	3
Total	18	40	2	17

Both tables allow for the following conclusions: first, two particular large gaps appear in between meetings of the Defence (Transition) Committee between 28 August and 7 September; and again between 18 September and 30 October. The first of these gaps testifies to the readiness of the military and administrative apparatus to embark on an invasion. The Defence (Transition) Committee had been installed to deal with all administrative implications of military operations against Egypt. For instance, it organized the printing of banknotes that could be used in Egyptian territory that would be occupied. Its September meetings were a consequence of the military's change of landing place from Port Said to Alexandria. Similarly, the absence of meetings from 18 September to the end of October relates to the state of readiness of the troops to implement Musketeer Revise. The committee's meetings in October and November reflect the process of monitoring the actual operations.

Second, one can draw the general conclusion from table 11.2 that an overall shift occurs from decisions being taken in the context of frequent Egypt Committee meetings towards decisions taken in the context of regular Cabinet meetings, which are surrounded by informal meetings of senior ministers. In particular, it is odd to observe in table 11.1 that only one Egypt Committee meeting was held between 10 October and 1 November, the period

during which Challe unfurls his plan, the Sèvres negotiations take place, and military operations start.

Third, the sheer number of informal meetings surrounding decisions 4 and 5 (the decision to refer the matter to the U.N.O., and the decision to adopt the Challe-plan) suggests that this habit of informal gathering became the dominant pattern of decision making, although it should be added that many Cabinet members were present at those Egypt Committee meetings that concern decision 4<sup>2</sup>.

Does this view correspond with the discussion of the six crucial decisions in the preceding chapters? As to decision 1, the choice of diplomacy over force, it was argued that this decision was effectively taken by the Egypt Committee, but affected by an informal meeting on 26 July. Decision 2, sending off the Menzies mission to Egypt, was taken by the Egypt Committee, but grounded in two informal meetings. The same can be said of decision 3, the adoption of S.C.U.A. and the simultaneous withdrawal of the pilots. Decision 4, reference to the Security Council, was taken on a purely informal basis. Decision 5, accepting the Challe plan, was effectively taken by the Cabinet, with an occasional role for the Egypt Committee (17 October), but was heavily dependent on consensus among senior ministers, previously reached on an informal basis. The last decision 6, continuing military operations, was contingent on both the Cabinet and the Egypt Committee meetings that surrounded the former's gatherings, but was seriously affected by an informal meeting on 1 November, outside the usual inner circle, in which the compromise of accepting a U.N. emergency force was prepared.

#### 16.2.1 Groupthink

If this is the correct pattern, then one would logically expect the occurrence of symptoms of groupthink to run parallel to this shift in loci of decision making. This suggestion is confirmed in table 16.3 on the next page. The distribution of the symptoms of groupthink confirms the pattern of decision making that was alluded to in section 11.1. Towards the end of the crisis (decisions 5 & 6), groupthink symptoms do not occur in the Egypt Committee, but in the inner group, and especially in the Cabinet. Until that time, apart from the first phase of the crisis, symptoms are absent at the Cabinet level, but surface in the Egypt Committee. The inner group regularly displays groupthink symptoms, most frequently during deliberations as to the London Conference (decision 2).

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<sup>2</sup> On 12, 14, and 17 September, there were twelve out of 18 Cabinet members present; on 19 September, only eleven ministers attended; see also appendix 3.

Tabel 16.3: Symptoms of groupthink per decision

	1**	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Sub	Tot
D 1										4
IG*								1	1	
EC								1	1	
Cab	1	1							2	
D 2										5
IG	1		1		1				3	
EC						2			2	
Cab									-	
D 3										7
IG				1	1				2	
EC				1	1	1	1		4	
Cab				1					1	
D 4										1
IG			1						1	
EC									-	
Cab									-	
D 5										6
IG					2				2	
EC									-	
Cab			1		1	1		1	4	
D 6										6
IG	1								1	
EC									-	
Cab	1	1	1		1		1		5	

**Explanation:**

\* IG=Inner group

EC=Egypt Committee

Cab=Cabinet

\*\* Symptoms of groupthink: 1=illusion of invulnerability; 2=belief in inherent morality; 3=collective rationalization; 4=stereotypes of outgroups; 5=self-censorship; 6=illusion of unanimity; 7=direct pressure on dissenters; 8=self-appointed mindguards

Note: I have decided not to include one common collective rationalization in explaining the lack of American support, that is, the election motive, because it occurs in all three units of decision making throughout the crisis, and would thus obscure the differentiation in groupthink symptoms.

On the whole, the picture suggests, first, that during the first months of the crisis an inner group prepared decisions, which were effectively taken in the Egypt Committee, while towards the end of the crisis an inner group led the dance with the Cabinet rather than the Egypt Committee. Second, it can be concluded that the decisions 3, 5, and 6 display most symptoms of groupthink. It will appear that precisely these three decisions can be characterized by elements of defective decision making.

Of course, it is not sufficient to simply observe the occurrence of symptoms of groupthink to establish its relevant role in the decision making process. It will be necessary to assess whether the small group fulfills the antecedent conditions that have been formulated by Janis. Furthermore, it has to be argued that the occurrence of the symptoms can be related to defective decision making in a reasonable way, and, in our case, to the puzzle of Suez. This will be postponed to the next chapter. The first requirement, however, is to identify the small group.

#### (A) Identifying the small group(s)

In table 16.3 a distinction was made between three small groups which, in different degrees, displayed symptoms of groupthink: the Cabinet, the Egypt Committee, and an inner group of senior ministers. Is it possible to identify the participants of each decision making unit?

1. The Cabinet. Eighteen ministers belonged to the Cabinet, as distinguished from the Government<sup>3</sup>: Sir Anthony Eden (Prime Minister), Lord Salisbury (Lord President of the Council), Mr. Selwyn Lloyd (Foreign Secretary), Mr. Macmillan (Chancellor of the Exchequer), Mr. Butler (Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons), Lord Kilmuir (Lord Chancellor), Sir Walter Monckton (Minister of Defence, until 18 October 1956; from that date Paymaster-General), Mr. Head (Minister of Defence from 18 October 1956), Mr. Lloyd-George (Home Secretary), Mr. Lennox-Boyd (Colonial Secretary), Lord Home (Secretary for Commonwealth Relations), Mr. Stuart (Secretary of State for Scotland), Mr. Thorneycroft (President of the Board of Trade), Mr. Sandys (Minister of Housing and Local Government), Lord Woolton (Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster), Sir David Eccles (Minister of Education), Mr. Heathcoat Amory (Minister of Agriculture), and Mr. Peake (Minister of Pensions). Most Ministers were present at all Cabinet meetings that were held during the crisis. Major absentees had been Butler on 27 July (illness) and 21 August

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<sup>3</sup> After 18 October, when Monckton resigned as Minister of Defence, but stayed on as Paymaster-General, the full Cabinet consisted of 19 Persons.

(holiday); Monckton on 1 and 2 August (illness); Lloyd on 3 and 9 October (United Nations), and Macmillan on 26 September (IMF meeting in Washington).

2. The Egypt Committee. From the records it is possible to calculate who have been the most frequent visitors to 40 Egypt Committee meetings between 27 July and 4 November. These data are presented in table 16.4:

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**Table 16.4: Frequency of attendance at 40 EC meetings**

<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Policymaker</u>
38	Eden*
37	Brook (Secretary to the Cabinet)
36	Home*
36	Macmillan*
32	Lloyd*
31	Head#* (Secretary of State for War)
31	Thorneycroft*
30	Salisbury*
30	Watkinson# (Minister of Transport)
28	Monckton*
27	Butler*
21	Lennox Boyd*
19	Dickson (Chairman of Chiefs of Staff)
11	Kirkpatrick (Permanent Secretary at FO)
10	Kilmuir*
10	Templer (Imperial General Staff)
9	Mountbatten (First Sea Lord)
8	Jones# (Minister of Fuel and Power)
7	Boyle (Air Chief of Staff)
7	Birch# (Secretary of State for Air)
7	Hailsham# (Secretary of State for the Navy)
6	Heath (Chief Whip)
4	Keightley (Commander Operation Musketeer)
3	Heathcoat Amory*
2	Nutting# (Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office)
2	Powell (?)
2	Ivelaw-Chapman (Air Force)

\* Member of the Cabinet

# Member of the Government

Source: calculations based on CAB 134/1216, Public Record Office, Kew.

**Table 16.4 (continued)**

Several individuals attended the meetings only once: Davis (naval staff), Snelling (Commonwealth Office), Caccia (Foreign Office), Reading (FO), Dean (FO), Lambe (Second Sea Lord), Jenkins (Ministry of Transport), Dickson (Foreign Office), Inglis (naval Intelligence), Hare (Secretary of State for War).

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3. The inner group. It is much more difficult to trace those individuals who constituted the inner circle of senior ministers, first, because undoubtedly the number of informal meetings on the record, is incomplete; second, because it is known that many informal meetings between only two ministers took place; third, because sometimes records miss out some of the participants. It was possible to trace the attendance of 12 out of 18 informal meetings with at least 3 senior ministers present. Tables 16.5 and 16.6 on page 292 give an overview divided by each decisional conflict. Table 16.4 showed that the Egypt Committee was usually attended by a group consisting of Eden, Home, Macmillan, Lloyd, Head, Thorneycroft, Salisbury, Watkinson, Monckton, and Butler<sup>4</sup>. Lennox-Boyd and Dickson were regularly present as well. Tables 16.5 and 16.6 suggest that those informal meetings of which participation is known, were dominated by Eden, Lloyd, and Macmillan, and to a lesser extent by Kilmuir, Butler, and Salisbury. A look at the dynamics of participation of Egypt Committee (Appendix 3) and informal meetings (table 16.5) reveals that Kilmuir gets involved with the Egypt Committee from 10 August onwards, which is reflected in his increasing attendance of informal meetings since September. Salisbury, on the contrary, is a frequent visitor of both decision making units until the presentation of Challe-plan on 16 October. Although he would attend all Cabinet meetings, he no longer appeared in the Egypt Committee or at informal gatherings. This may indicate his growing apprehension about the use of force, and his eventual vote in favour of halting all operations on the crucial Cabinet meeting of 4 November<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> The attendance of Sir Norman Brook, Secretary to the Cabinet, raises the question why the man who might qualify as the best informed civil servant never spoke up at the various meetings. Brook is portrayed as the most important civil servant at Whitehall during and after World War 2 (together with Sir Edward Bridges), and as someone who 'did not shrink from pressing his own opinions before Cabinet or Cabinet committee meetings'. Hennessy suggests that Brook was against military force. Although Clark's 'Whitehall diary' does not completely support this contention, the real question that Hennessy fails to raise in his book is why Brook, having been present at most Egypt Committee and Cabinet meetings, and having presided over the Defence (Transition) Committee which prepared the administration of occupied Egyptian territory, did not speak up; Peter Hennessy, *Whitehall*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1989, pp. 138 ff., 167, quote from p. 147.

<sup>5</sup> Salisbury's change of opinion has never been properly explained; on the eve of the invasion, however, Salisbury still approved of the plan, as is shown by his minute to Eden on 29 October; PREM 11/1129.

**Table 16.5 : Attendance of 12 informal meetings**

	D 1	D 2	D 3	D 4	D 5	D 6	Total
Eden	1		1	2	4	2	10
Salisbury	1		1	1	1		4
Lloyd	1		2	1	4	3	9
Home	1				1	1	3
Kilmuir	1			1	2	2	6
Macmillan			1	3	3	1	8
Butler			1	1	3		5
Head			1		3		4
Thorneycroft					1		1
Nutting					1		1
Lennox-Boyd						1	1
Total meetings per decision	1	-	1	3	4	3	12

**Table 16.6 : Number of informal meetings per decisions of which participant are known and unknown.**

	D 1	D 2	D 3	D 4	D 5	D 6	Total
known	1	-	1	3	4	3	12
unknown	-	2	-	1	2	1	6
total	1	2	1	4	6	4	18

Tables 16.4 and 16.5 therefore allow for the claim that an inner circle existed, consisting of Eden, Lloyd, Macmillan, Salisbury, Kilmuir (from mid-August), and Butler<sup>6</sup>. Secondly, these Ministers were also the most frequent visitors of the Egypt Committee; in addition, that committee was frequented by Monckton and Home as Senior Ministers, and Thorneycroft and Watkinson as Cabinet members, and Head as Secretary of State for War.

It is thus possible to identify three small decision making units: the Cabinet, the Egypt Committee, and the inner circle. Janis's theory specifies several antecedent conditions that may further the occurrence of groupthink; to what extent is the occurrence of groupthink in the case of Suez related to the presence of these antecedent variables?

#### (B) Antecedent conditions of groupthink

In his theory of groupthink Janis makes a distinction between three types of antecedent conditions which will further premature concurrence-seeking: first, decision makers form a cohesive group; second, the existence of a provocative situational context; third, the presence of structural organizational faults<sup>7</sup>. Can British decision making during the Suez crisis be said to fulfill these conditions?

1. Decision makers form a cohesive group. It is very difficult to assess the degree of real cohesion within either Cabinet, the Egypt Committee, or the inner circle. Moreover, it will be necessary to take somehow political factors into consideration, as cabinet decision making can be conflict-ridden for various reasons<sup>8</sup>. I will argue that only the inner circle can be said to come close to a cohesive group, but that part of those inner group relations should be considered from a political perspective.

One way to measure cohesion would be to look at the type of education Cabinet members had enjoyed. It appears that all but two had been at Oxford and Cambridge, while nine came from Eton<sup>9</sup>. Although the socialization effect of a common educational background (public school) should not be underestimated, it would be equally hazardous to exaggerate its

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<sup>6</sup> It should be recalled that within the inner group Eden, MacMillan, Lloyd, and Salisbury were the ministers who kept in touch with representatives of the United States Government.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. chapter 6, pp. 126-127.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. 't Hart, Groupthink in Government, chapter 10, or, from a different perspective, Jean Blondel, 'Decision-Making Processes, Conflicts, and Cabinet Government', EUI Working Paper No. 88/327, European University Institute, Florence, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, The Suez Affair, p. 41.



influence: given the fact that, certainly in those days, Eton and Oxbridge furnished a disproportionally large part of British Government officials, the regular occurrence of policy divergences, such as the Tory Party's and Churchill Government's internal division over the Suez Canal Treaty, requires explanation.

It has been suggested that war-time experience might have constituted a factor of cohesion during the Suez crisis<sup>10</sup>. Similarly, it has been argued that the impact of Munich 1938 had a lasting impact on those Cabinet members who were in politics at the time. Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan and Sandys had been opponents of appeasement in 1938, while Butler, Lennox-Boyd, Kilmuir, Stuart, and Home had been advocates. Although it is rather speculative to establish a direct link between group cohesion and an individual's attitude towards appeasement, it is the case that Salisbury, Macmillan, and Sandys were among the staunchest advocates of a tough policy<sup>11</sup>. Macmillan has afterwards suggested that the divisions within the Cabinet perfectly reflected the pre-war division over Munich<sup>12</sup>, but this is clearly incorrect, as Kilmuir, Home, as well as Lennox-Boyd were just as hawkish as Macmillan and Salisbury.

The Munich experience may have been important to furthering a certain bond between Eden, Salisbury, and Macmillan<sup>13</sup>, all three central to the decision making process. On the whole, however, it is more likely that a variety of considerations explained the relative cohesion of the political elite. First of all, opposition to Chamberlain's appeasing of Mussolini, had created strong personal ties between Eden and Salisbury. The latter, then known under the name Lord Cranborne, resigned with Eden from the Foreign Office, and is considered to have been one of Eden's few personal friends in politics.

Second, internal party politics and personal ambitions should be taken into account. Much has been written about the interpersonal rivalries within the Eden Government. Two major sources of conflict stand out: Eden's tendency to try to dominate foreign policy, and the rivalry between Macmillan and Butler to become Eden's political heir. Although both sources

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas, *ibid.*; six ministers had served in World War One (Eden, Macmillan, Lloyd George, Monckton, Salisbury, Stuart); four in World War Two (Lloyd, Sandys, MacLeod, Buchan-Hepburn).

<sup>11</sup> Sandys appears as a hawk in Monckton's accounts of Cabinet meetings to William Clark, e.g. Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 30 October 1956, p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> Macmillan, *Riding the Storm*, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> Although Carlton argues that Eden was not an unequivocal opponent of Munich, he makes it also clear that Salisbury and Macmillan were part of the so-called 'Eden-group' of some 25 Conservative M.P.'s who were opposed to appeasement, Carlton, *Anthony Eden. A Biography*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1981, pp. 132-142.

of conflict, arguably, testify to some lack of cohesion of the inner group of the Eden Government, it is incorrect to deduce that it seriously hampered decision making during Suez.

In April 1955 Eden appointed Macmillan as his Foreign Secretary, but replaced him with Selwyn Lloyd in December, presumably because Macmillan proved to be a much more independent Foreign Secretary than Eden had anticipated. Although this is a standard interpretation of the dynamics within the Eden Government<sup>14</sup>, it does not account for Macmillan's pivotal role during Suez from the very start, notably his regular private meetings with Eden. Apart from their disagreement on inviting Israel to attack Egypt in early August, no major differences occurred between Eden and Macmillan during the crisis. Similarly, although Butler's and Macmillan's jockeying for position, as potential heir-apparent to Eden made some observers accuse them of lack of loyalty towards Eden<sup>15</sup>, it is difficult to show how far this actually affected the decision making process during Suez<sup>16</sup>.

The 'pecking order' within the Eden Government is the third factor that should be taken into account when estimating the extent of group cohesion. British Governments are characterised by a distinctive hierarchy, separating those ministers who are part of the Cabinet and those who are not; and secondly separating senior ministers, who form the inner core of the Cabinet from the rest<sup>17</sup>. One consequence of this pecking order was that meetings were not always among equals. A proposed course of action carries more weight if supported by a number of senior ministers. Conversely, opposition is likely to have more impact if led by a senior minister. A second consequence is the occurrence of what might be called status incongruity, when someone holds the post of a senior minister, but cannot really be considered a senior minister with respect to the other sources of seniority. Such was the case with Selwyn Lloyd, who was promoted to the Foreign Office after hardly eight months of Cabinet

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<sup>14</sup> E.g., Horne, *Macmillan, 1894-1956*, pp. 374-376; Carlton, *Anthony Eden. A Biography*, p. 369; James, *Anthony Eden*, pp. 424-425; tension between Eden and Macmillan over foreign policy regularly appears in Shuckburgh's diary *Descent to Suez*.

<sup>15</sup> Such was Clark's judgment in April 1956: 'these three [Eden, Macmillan, Butler] watch each other like hostile lynxes', Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 6-9 April 1956, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, the competition itself continued: e.g. Clark describes how Macmillan had himself cheered at before entering 10, Downing Street, apparently revealing his ambitions to become Prime Minister, Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 22 August 1956, p. 117.

<sup>17</sup> The source of seniority is related to a complicated mixture of someone's standing within the Party, Government experience, and the particular post one holds.

experience. He was clearly not considered to be the equal of other senior ministers<sup>18</sup>. Indeed, Lloyd had been given the Foreign Office in order to allow Eden more room to manoeuvre in foreign policy. Lloyd himself accepted this view, when he told Shuckburgh in January 1956 that he was 'a contented animal. I know I have been over-promoted; there can be no question of my disloyalty'<sup>19</sup>. Obviously then, the voices of senior ministers, such as Macmillan, Salisbury, Butler, Monckton, and Kilmuir carried more weight than others'.

The pattern of dependencies within the Cabinet went even further than that. One frequent participant of Egypt Committee meetings, Peter Thorneycroft, President of the Board of Trade, had been done a favour by Eden, who had spoken up for him with Churchill in 1945, when Thorneycroft had lost his constituency in the election<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, Home had been Eden's Parliamentary Private Secretary in 1937<sup>21</sup>, and had been promoted to Cabinet status in April 1955, when he became Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations in the Eden Government. Their political position may therefore have been closely intertwined with Eden's.

In conclusion, it would be an exaggeration to say that either the Cabinet or the Egypt Committee had been a cohesive group, especially because the number of political nuances that should be taken into account. Nevertheless, it would be safe to conclude that the larger portion of the inner group around Eden, consisting of Macmillan, Salisbury, Kilmuir, Home, and Lloyd formed a reasonably cohesive whole, despite the difficulties between Eden and Macmillan. Part of this cohesion is grounded in a common pre-war experience (Eden, Macmillan, and Salisbury); part should be explained by political dependency relations within the Cabinet. This conclusion will appear all the more relevant if it is taken into consideration that Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, and Lloyd kept in touch with representatives of the American Government during the crisis.

2. A provocative situational context. Janis makes a distinction between high stress generated by an external threat and stress arising from temporary low self-esteem of the group. Both conditions may further the occurrence of groupthink.

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<sup>18</sup> Notably by Macmillan, his predecessor at the Foreign Office, who allegedly mocked with Lloyd in front of Eden during the crisis; Home, Macmillan, 1894-1956, p. 433.

<sup>19</sup> Evelyn Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez. Diaries, 1951-6, entry 28 January 1956, p. 327.

<sup>20</sup> Eden told Lloyd about this during a conversation on 30 May 1958, when both examined the draft of Eden's memoirs of Suez, Full Circle, FO 800/728.

<sup>21</sup> James, Anthony Eden, p. 183.

**2.1 High stress.** It has been argued in Chapter 9 that the six crucial decisions that have been the subject of analysis can be qualified as so-called conflictual decisions, or hot cognitions. These are decision making situations in which every course of action available entails the risk of serious losses. This type of decision, presumably, raises the level of stress under which decision makers operate. The fundamental conflict, as perceived by British policymakers, was that taking strong action would have a strong negative effect on the British position in the Middle East, while doing nothing, or not enough, would imply the slow deterioration of the British Middle Eastern position because Nasser would gain immensely in prestige if he could 'get away with it'. Evidence of the stress generated by decisional conflict can be observed with the decision makers' perception of a negative choice: throughout the crisis, they are worried by the prospect that both taking strong action and inaction would have a significant impact on British influence in the Middle East. Such perceptions were held by such different individuals as Norman Brook, a civil servant central to decision making, Harold Macmillan, a clear hawk, 'Bobbety' Salisbury, a hawk with growing doubts, and Walter Monckton, an eventual opponent of force<sup>22</sup>.

At each crucial decision, the high level of stress generated by this fundamental conflict was increased by further considerations, and specific deadlines: how to respond to an equivocal outcome of the London Conference, (decision 2), what to do if Nasser gave no clear answer to Menzies, how to deal with new American proposals, such as the users' association (decisions 3 and 4), how to react to the likely introduction of the Winter plan (decision 5), etc..

**2.2 Temporary low self-esteem.** Although none of the three causes of low self-esteem that Janis distinguishes<sup>23</sup> seems directly relevant to British decision makers, it can be argued that the Eden Government had not been considered a balanced, stable, and effective Government ever since the Cabinet reshuffle of December 1955. Kilmuir even speaks of 'a

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<sup>22</sup> Brook, driving William Clark home, told him that 'the dilemma [] is that it will be bad if we do not act and will be bad if we do act', Clark 'Whitehall diary', entry 9 August 1956, p. 110; on 24 August Monckton wrote to himself that if Nasser responded with an act of war, 'our difficulties may be resolved', Monckton papers, 6(175-177); that same day Macmillan noted in his diary that 'when we take strong action we have had it; if we suffer a diplomatic defeat: we have equally had it', Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, diary entry 24 August 1956, pp. 410-411; a similar dilemma was presented to the Cabinet by Salisbury on 28 August, CM(56)62. Lloyd would give the same analysis, when asked to assess the likely result of prolonged negotiations on 23 October, CM(65)72.

<sup>23</sup> Recent failures that make group members' inadequacies salient; excessive difficulties on current decision making that lower each member's sense of self-efficacy; moral dilemmas, provoked by the apparent lack of feasible alternatives except the ones that violate ethical standards, Janis, Groupthink, pp. 244, 301-302.

dramatic fall in the popularity of the Government and Sir Anthony Eden<sup>24</sup>. It has been argued that during the first half of 1956 the Government deliberately looked for ways to improve its popularity by strong action in the field of foreign affairs, notably Cyprus and Buraimi<sup>25</sup>. Even though the public criticism of the Government and its leadership had lessened in the Spring, it is conceivable that the label of weak Government had left its imprint on the Government when it had to face the crisis of the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company.

Indeed, evidence exists that, at least in the early stages of the crisis, the future of the Eden Government was considered closely tied to its handling of the crisis. Clark, Eden's press officer, repeatedly noted that the crisis was Eden's gravest moment: 'for if he does not act strongly and effectively, he will be out'<sup>26</sup>. Monckton as well thought not taking a tough line 'would be fatal for the Government'<sup>27</sup>. Although the political stakes were high, as one would reasonably expect in any major foreign policy crisis in which military action is contemplated, it would be wrong to conclude that decisionmakers were suffering from a low self-esteem due to their recent unpopularity.

3. Structural faults of the organization. Three organizational characteristics seem to have been relevant to British decision making: (1) the relative insulation of the group, (2) a lack of norms requiring methodical procedures, and (3) directive leadership. Actually, the latter two elements, which underline the attitude of the group's leader towards its deliberations, form the bridge between group and individual variable, between groupthink and operational code: they form indicators of the crucial leadership plays in structuring the decision making process, and thereby in stimulating groupthink; it thus opens up an opportunity for the individual's cognitive belief system to come into play.

3.1 Insulation of the group. British decision makers isolated themselves from the outer world to a considerable extent. Four types of insulation affected the decision making process: (1) the confinement of military information to the Egypt Committee, (2) the disregard of the civil service, (3) the lack of contact with the opposition, and (4) the deliberate decision at the beginning of October not to consult the United States Government.

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<sup>24</sup> Kilmuir, Political Adventure, p. 255; cf. Butler, The Art of the Possible, pp. 182-183.

<sup>25</sup> Carlton, Anthony Eden, pp. 399-400.

<sup>26</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 29 July 1956, p. 102.

<sup>27</sup> Monckton in a conversation with Clark over lunch, Clark, op. cit., entry 14 August 1956, p. 113.

1. Military information. It had been decided that information on military planning be confined to a restricted group of Ministers, effectively those on the Egypt Committee. As a matter of fact, an entirely new procedure, named Terrapin, was installed to this effect. Despite the obvious, and reasonable, consideration that military plans should not come out in the open, the eventual consequence of adopting Terrapin was a lack of information about military planning at the level of the full Cabinet. In August Duncan Sandys (Housing and Local Government) had written to Eden to express his worries about this matter. Eden's reply on August 22 made clear once more the role of the inner circle in military affairs:

'Knowledge of the details must, for obvious reasons of security, be confined within the narrowest possible circle. Such political guidance as the military authorities may need in the preparation of their plans must continue to be given by me, in consultation with a small number of my most senior Cabinet colleagues and, as necessary, such Departmental Ministers as may be directly concerned'<sup>28</sup>.

The adoption of Terrapin had two important consequences: firstly, the Cabinet was not aware of any reservations the military might have about military operations; secondly, the Cabinet had to discuss the Challe-plan without any knowledge of the contingencies of military planning. By consequence, it had to make decisions about the feasibility of the plan without knowing that it would take the fleet about a week to arrive at Port Said. Subsequently, these six days would prove fatal in the light of mounting international pressure.

2. Disregard of the civil service. Most civil servants were completely unaware of the considerations and decisions made by the Egypt Committee and Cabinet. Actually, only Sir Norman Brook, Secretary to the Cabinet, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, and Patrick Dean, Deputy Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, were fully informed<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, reports from civil servants on such vital matters as financial and economic consequences and international law reached decision makers through their Ministers, Macmillan, Lloyd, and Kilmuir. The Egypt Committee has thus never been in a position to examine all positive and negative aspects of the objectives and alternative courses of action, because, first of all, civil servants had to compile reports without full knowledge of political and military objectives, and, secondly, because part of the information that reached the

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<sup>28</sup> James, Anthony Eden, p. 499.

<sup>29</sup> The same had happened in France where the Quai d'Orsay had been excluded from the decision making process, not in the least because it was considered an anti-Israeli, and pro-Arab lobby; Paul Ely, Mémoires. ii: Suez...le 13 Mai, Plon, 1969, pp. 99, 114; Christian Pineau, 1956, Suez, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1976, pp. 65-66.

Committee, had to pass several gate-keepers, who sometimes decided to act as self-appointed mindguards, and not to pass certain bits of information to their colleagues.

3. Ignoring the opposition. Despite the fact that this crisis was defined as a threat to British national interests, British policymakers did not put much effort in trying to solicit national support by keeping in touch with opposition parties. Although they had not been incorporated in Clement Attlee's Committee that handled the 1951 Abadan crisis, Eden and Churchill had been regularly consulted by Attlee and Morrison<sup>30</sup>. In the beginning of August a certain kind of correspondence had developed between Eden and Gaitskell. Eden's aim had been to extract a promise from Labour's leader that Gaitskell's rather belligerent speech in the Commons on 2 August still reflected his Party's mood. After Salisbury, Eden, and Lloyd had met with a few representatives of Labour on 14 August, and it had become clear that Labour was opposed to the use of force without United Nations approval, contacts were interrupted. Instead of trying to involve the opposition, even at an informative level, British decisionmakers decided not to keep in touch: on 15 September Macmillan and Eden decided not to respond to a letter by Gaitskell, published in The Times the previous day.

4. Leaving the Americans in the dark. The United States Government were no longer informed, let alone consulted, about joint policies towards Egypt, after Challe and Gazier had visited Chequers to present their ingenious plan. Although this situation perfectly fitted the collective rationalizations which British politicians had developed about the American attitude<sup>31</sup>, it contributed to the British surprise at American opposition to the Anglo-French policy from 30 October onwards. Moreover, the fact that Great Britain had no Ambassador available in Washington between 20 October and 8 November made it very difficult to explain this policy to the American Government<sup>32</sup>.

All this evidence amounts to the conclusion that British decision makers, in the Egypt Committee, and even more in the Cabinet constituted a rather insulated group. As such this

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<sup>30</sup> Colin Seymour-Ure, 'British "War Cabinets" in Limited Wars: Korea, Suez, and the Falklands', Public Administration, (62), 1984, pp. 181-200. Eden told Sir Robert Lockhart in 1948 during the 1948 Berlin crisis that Churchill and he were kept informed by Attlee and Bevin; Kenneth Young (ed.), The Diaries of Sir Robert Lockhart. Volume 2. 1939-1965, Macmillan, 1980, entry 21 August 1948, p. 670.

<sup>31</sup> Basically, they believed that the Americans did not want to be informed of military action.

<sup>32</sup> Sir Roger Makins had been recalled, and had returned to London to take up a new job at the Treasury. The new Ambassador, Sir Harold Caccia, had left London, but travelled by ship, thus causing this period of almost three weeks during which the United Kingdom was not represented by an Ambassador in the United States. In 1960 Eden told Lockhart that he regretted not to have sent Caccia by plane; Young, The Diaries of Sir Robert Burce Lockhart, entry 22 April 1960, p. 762. At the time, of course, it may have been convenient.

counts as an organizational feature that might have been conducive to the occurrence of groupthink.

3.2 Lack of norms requiring methodical procedures. By its very nature the British Cabinet is dominated by its Prime Minister, who has certain prerogatives, one of which setting its agenda and chairing its meetings. The particular leadership style which each Prime Minister develops, will therefore strongly affect the quality of the decision making process. It has been observed that Cabinets seldom act like truly collegial bodies that look at matters carefully, although they do not make discussion impossible either<sup>33</sup>. Very few governing bodies have developed any formal rules which would contribute to high quality decision making<sup>34</sup>.

The style that Eden had developed as Prime Minister, certainly did not contribute to methodical decision making procedures. He introduced the habit of seeing his senior colleagues alone:

'I thought Baldwin's method of frequent consultation alone with each of his principal colleagues was good and I followed it. [] My colleagues knew that I was always available to each of them and we saved the Cabinet some extra stress of business that way'<sup>35</sup>.

The charts in chapters 10-15 clearly demonstrate that Eden continued consulting the members of his inner circle individually in private meetings or over the telephone, especially Macmillan, Lloyd, Salisbury, and Kilmuir. This may have had its effect on the quality of decision making surrounding Suez.

3.3 Lack of tradition of impartial leadership. No clear evidence exists that Eden as Prime Minister tried to impose his preferences on those of his colleagues. Nevertheless, as a Foreign Secretary, Eden had become known for his habit of constantly phoning to collaborators about all aspects of policy. This continued after he became Prime Minister, and involved especially those ministers who were involved with foreign affairs, such as Macmillan and Lloyd, when they were Foreign Secretary, and Home, as Commonwealth Secretary<sup>36</sup>. Eden displayed the same attitude towards his direct subordinates: Clark, Eden's press

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<sup>33</sup> Blondel, 'Decision-making processes, conflicts, and cabinet government', pp. 26-27.

<sup>34</sup> Indeed, much of the American literature on crisis decision making aims at developing such norms, and at suggesting to members of the Administration that adopting them might not be bad thing; e.g., Alexander L. George, 'The Case for Multiple Advocacy in Making Foreign Policy', American Political Science Review, (66), 1972, pp. 751-795.

<sup>35</sup> Eden, Full Circle, pp. 269-270. Cf. James, Anthony Eden, p. 439.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. James, Anthony Eden, p. 411. See also, David Reynolds, 'Eden the Diplomatist, 1931-56: Suezside of Statesman?', History, No. 289, 1989, pp. 65-69.



secretary, in reviewing his first six months at his job, noted in his diary that '[t]here never was a day when he didn't ring up one of the P[ri]vate S[ecretaries] to worry about something'<sup>37</sup>.

This evidence of interference does not constitute sufficient ground for the claim that the Eden Government until the start of the Suez crisis was characterized by a consistent absence of impartial leadership. Interference does not automatically equal imposition. Indeed, many heads of Government who have been praised for their leadership style have been known as constantly being in touch with their ministers and staff. Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy (after the Bay of Pigs fiasco) come to mind.

As a matter of fact, in two decisions Eden did not display directive leadership at all. In four decisions, however, his handling situation affected the decision making process; in two of those cases quite strongly. Eden's way of chairing meetings of the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet has been very important with respect to the simultaneous decision to accept S.C.U.A. and recall the pilots (decision 3) as well as the decision to adopt the Challe-plan (decision 5). In the former case, when it had to be decided how to respond to the results of the Menzies mission, Eden tried to rush things through: he wanted to refer the matter to the United Nations, so that military operations could start soon afterwards. Similarly, the adoption of S.C.U.A. was a result of the way Eden presented the likely American attitude to the Egypt Committee and Cabinet, and the personal judgment he added, first mistrusting Dulles's proposal, then going along with it.

The adoption of the Challe-plan was strongly affected, first of all, by the way information about the American attitude was distributed: on the Cabinet of 3 October. Eden let the text of Dulles's anti-colonialist press conference pass around the table. Furthermore, the way he chaired those Cabinet meetings at which the Challe-plan was discussed, shows that he did not shy away from soliciting his colleagues to agree, because the matter had been agreed upon by their senior colleagues previously. Clearly then, Eden's directive leadership has hindered the development of an open decision making process regarding both decisions 3 and 5. As a matter of fact, these decisions display a very high number of symptoms of groupthink (7 and 6 respectively).

Decisions 1 and 2 have also been affected by directive leadership; the way the issue was defined at the very first Cabinet meeting on 27 July had a lot to do with the way Eden chaired the discussion: instead of assuming the role of an impartial chairman, who asks his colleagues after their definition of the problem, he chose to open the meeting by giving his

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<sup>37</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 6-9 entry 1956, p. 70. Clark's diary is full of records of similar phonecalls by a worried and interfering Eden.

own view. Later in August, when British decision makers had to make up their minds about what should be done after the London Conference, an open decision was made more difficult by Eden's reluctance to share the full contents of messages from the United States Government with the Cabinet. Had he done so, American hesitations about the use of force would have been more clearly known to the Cabinet.

Two decisions (4 and 6) are hardly affected by directive leadership. This comes as no surprise with respect to the decision to refer the matter to the United Nations (decision 4), as this decision has been taken informally by Eden, Lloyd, and probably, Macmillan. It is more puzzling in the case of the decision to continue operations despite growing international and domestic pressure (decision 6), especially because this decision displays a rather high number of symptoms of groupthink: as a matter of fact, the records of the Cabinet meetings in the relevant period reveal that the Cabinet held open and full discussions in which each member was explicitly invited to express his views, and which were characterized by a search for, and assessment of, alternative options. The paradox is explained by entrapment: once the Cabinet had adopted the Challe-plan, and subsequent events had invited them to put the plan into action, all further discussion was held in terms of the agreed plan. Most symptoms of groupthink thus reflect collective attempts to stress the positive aspects of the plan and to suppress possible negative consequences<sup>34</sup>.

Antecedent condition of groupthink; conclusions. If one overlooks the antecedent conditions of groupthink, then one could conclude, first, that the inner group of British decisionmakers constituted a reasonably cohesive group, but that this cohesion is partly grounded in the dependency relationship between senior and junior ministers. Second, British policy makers were constantly facing a situation of high stress, provoked by a situation which can be characterized as a choice between alternatives that each entail negative consequences. Third, they were insulated from the outer world and chaired by a leader who was not used to collective decision making, but rather to meeting his colleagues individually. Finally, other elements, traditionally partial leadership, and low self-esteem, seem to have been of less importance. Nevertheless, although one cannot speak of a lack of tradition of impartial leadership, the way Eden chaired the meetings of Egypt Committee and, especially, the Cabinet has been relevant in four situations of decisional conflict.

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<sup>34</sup> This is called bolstering. In terms of the types of groupthink 't Hart distinguishes, decision 6 would be an example of collective over-optimism, cf. 't Hart, Groupthink in Government, p. 202-203. The only known exception has been Anthony Head who in the Egypt Committee kept on reminding British policymakers that the real objective was Nasser's downfall, which would not be guaranteed by 'protecting the Canal'.

### 16.2.2 The Operational Code

It has been argued that directive leadership constitutes the connection between groupthink and operational code: if the group's leader restricts decision making, it is very likely that his individual belief system will give a clue as to understanding the contents of the leader's approach to the problem that he is facing together with the group. As a matter of fact, Eden's operational code can be said to have been relevant at three instances, all of which coincide with Eden displaying directive leadership. All three moments are related to two important elements of Eden's operational code, firstly, his vision that it is possible to reach agreements with every actor in international relations, as long as gentleman-like behaviour is observed, grounded in the recognition of one's respective national interest. Secondly, his conviction that the United Nations had been reduced to a Cold War and propaganda instrument, without much political influence.

Eden's view of the nature of international relations explains why the Suez crisis started in July 1956, rather than in September 1955 (Czech arms deal) or in March 1956 (Glubb affair). With the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company Nasser had passed a certain threshold: it was no longer possible to reach agreements with a man who defied the essential rules of international relations. Eden's interpreted Dulles's anti-colonialist press conference in October in a similar manner. Having faced an American Secretary of State who blew hot and cold without much apparent consistency, Eden (and his colleagues) decided to no longer bother about Dulles's misgivings about S.C.U.A.. Instead, Eisenhower became the new focus of British expectations. In terms of Eden's operational code, Dulles had passed the same threshold and had become an unreliable actor in international affairs.

Eden's view of the nature of the United Nations explains why referring the matter to the Security Council was deemed unwise in July (decision 1): no helpful situation was to be expected from a body where the Soviet Union would veto any Anglo-French-American resolution. Similarly, it explains why Eden thought that going to the United Nations would be helpful in September (decision 3): because of the expected Russian veto any discussion would be quickly over with, and then military operations could start, unless Egypt would accept the 18 Powers' Proposals. Third, Eden's view of the United Nations contributes to our understanding of why British policymakers did not consider the possibility that deliberations might be transferred to the General Assembly, with the Uniting for Peace Procedure, and might thus provoke strong pressure from international public opinion (decision 5). An Anglo-French veto would paralyze the Security Council, and that would be the end of it. Nevertheless, this sense of frustration had been infiltrating the inner circle for several days

before the decision to go to the United Nations was actually taken. It thus counts more as a background against which decisions were taken rather than as an immediate response to provoked anger.

Lastly, Eden's initial reaction to Challe's presentation of his plan, seems the best example of an emotive decision rule and could be called the elated choice rule. However, it should be taken into account that Eden made no commitment and explicitly said that he had to consult his colleagues.

At no instance, therefore, do emotive decision rules occur as decisive factors in explaining crucial decisions. They rather reflect the state of mind of Eden and some of his Ministers at certain instances during the decision making process.

### **16.3 Variables that constrain the decision making process**

The analysis of six crucial decisions of the Suez crisis included two factors that acted as constraints on the independent variables: the organizational context and considerations of domestic politics. Their impact operated through the various decision making units that have been distinguished in this study: the Cabinet, the Egypt Committee, and the inner group. Both factors have influenced the decision making process to varying degree, but can be said to have played a decisive role only once, when in late July an immediate attack on Egypt appeared impossible.

#### **16.3.1 The organizational context: bureaucratic politics/organizational processes**

The considerations of British policymakers have been influenced by the military organization at five instances. First, at the very beginning of the crisis, swift retaliation was impossible because the required number of troops and ships were not immediately available. Furthermore, a delay of a state of readiness was caused by fundamental changes of the military plan, first on 10 August, when the Chiefs of Staff decided to land near Alexandria instead of Port Said, and, again, on 7 September, when these plans were reversed to the original target. Fourth, the Chiefs' presentation of a Winter plan made it clear to those British policymakers that preferred a vigorous response to Egypt, that they would have to act soon, if measures that would give the impression of demobilization, were to be avoided. Finally, the time that elapsed between the sailing of the fleet, and the disembarkment of the troops was due to organizational constraints. Although these were not directly relevant to the Cabinet's decision to continue the operation, they certainly made it possible that strong domestic and international pressure could

be mounted against Anglo-French policies. It can thus be concluded that organizational constraints have had a significant influence regarding decision 1 only.

#### 16.3.2 Considerations of domestic politics<sup>39</sup>

British policymakers were permanently aware of the effect their policies would have on its support in Parliament and the country at large. Only in two instances, however, can the decision making process be said to have been influenced by their domestic considerations. One involved the decision to refer the matter to the Security Council; another the decision to continue operations as planned.

Parliament was to return from Summer recess in mid-September. British policymakers feared that they would be forced to give a pledge that no force would be used without permission from the United Nations. Eden succeeded in avoiding such a promise in the Commons on 12 September by offering the users' association. In the following days, however, Conservative opposition to the use of force without having sought recourse to the United Nations, was growing. The British decision to refer the matter to the Security Council was partly taken in order to pacify dissenting members within the Conservative Party.

On 2 November, when handing over the 'policing task' to the United Nations seemed to offer a narrow escape from strong international pressure, the Cabinet faced a split of the Conservative Party because its hawks would consider that a pretext for aborting the invasion. In order not to offend the hardliners, the Cabinet, although accepting U.N. interference, had had to insist on the inclusion of Anglo-French forces in a U.N. emergency force. Although these domestic considerations narrowed down the range of options available to the Cabinet, they did not affect the decision to continue military operations: no U.N.-force had been formed, when Anglo-French forces landed in Port Said.

It can therefore be concluded that domestic politics has not been a decisive factor during the Suez crisis. Interestingly, when it played a -minor- role, British decision makers

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<sup>39</sup> Those studies that deal explicitly with domestic politics during the Suez crisis, do not attempt at assessing to what extent policymakers' domestic considerations influenced the decision making process; e.g., Epstein, British Politics in the Suez Crisis; Jean-Yves Bernard, 'Politique intérieure et décisions britanniques dans la crise de Suez, 1956', Relations internationales, no. 55, 1988, pp. 303-321.

were affected more by divergences within the Conservative Party<sup>40</sup> than by opposition from the Labour Party or from the public at large<sup>41</sup>.

#### 16.4 Conclusions

In this chapter an attempt was made to assess the relative influence of the various factors that might have affected the British decision making process. Table 16.6 on page 308 presents its findings in a compact way. Individual and group processes have been dominant during the decision making process, apart from decision 1, which is to be explained mainly by individual and bureaucratic factors. Decisions 2 and 3 seem the product of groupthink during inner circle considerations which recurs during the meetings of the Egypt Committee. Similarly, decisions 5 and 6 were taken by Cabinet suffering from groupthink, preceded by inner group meetings at which the same phenomenon occurs.

Directive leadership forms the bridge between the operational code and groupthink. When a leader dominates the decisional process, it is likely that his system of cognitive ideas provides a clue to the direction into which he will lead the group. This link between operational code, directive leadership and groupthink seems to have been particularly strong as to the adoption of the Challe-plan (decision 5). This allows for the conclusion that the intensified dissatisfaction with the American attitude regarding the function of S.C.U.A. and Dulles's famous anti-colonialist press conference of 2 October have been the catalyst in steering British decision makers to the use of force.

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<sup>40</sup> This confirms Epstein's analysis of domestic politics only to a certain extent, Epstein, British Politics in the Suez Crisis, chapter 4; Epstein's emphasis on the influence of the 'Suez-group' obscures the critical moment of early September, when the Government was confronted with a possible defeat in Parliament, because of the critical number of Conservative M.P.s opposed to the use of force, rather than the size of the hardliners of the 'Suez-group'. See, for a discussion of a clear anti-Eden bias in Epstein's analysis, Alexander J. Groth, 'Britain and America: Some Requisites of Executive Leadership Compared', Political Science Quarterly, (85), 2, 1970, pp. 228-232.

<sup>41</sup> Examples of analyses of public opinion and of the role news papers played, include: Christopher Thorne, 'Nationalism and Public Opinion in Britain', Orbis, (10), 4, 1967, pp. 1120-1137; Guillaume Parmentier, 'The British Press in the Suez Crisis', The Historical Journal, (23), 2, 1980, pp. 435-448; Ralph Negrine, 'The Press and the Suez Crisis: A Myth Re-Examined', The Historical Journal, (25), 4, 1982, pp. 975-983. None, however, aims at showing the possible influence of public opinion and of news papers' editorials on the decision making process. The records suggest that policymakers tended to explain away low rates of public support of the Government's handling of the crisis, by reasoning that the public wanted them to take an even tougher stand.

**Table 16.7 :The relative influence of independent and constraining variables in six decisional conflicts.**

	Independent variables				Constraining variables	
	Operational Code	Directive leadership	Groupthink		Organizational con-text	Domestic politics
			Inner group	Egypt Committee	Cabinet	
Decision 1	**	*	*		*	**
Decision 2		*	**	*		*
Decision 3	*	**	***	**		*
Decision 4			*			*
Decision 5	**	**	**		***	*
Decision 6			*		***	*

\* = minor role

\*\* = moderate role

\*\*\* = large role

Note: the occurrence of 1-2 symptoms of groupthink was coded \*; 3-4 symptoms as \*\*; and > 4 symbols as \*\*\*.

This chapter has identified the relative importance of the various independent and constraining variables that pertained to British decision making during the Suez crisis. It has not yet been demonstrated, however, that these variables can resolve the puzzle of Suez. The link between, on the one hand, Operational Code and Groupthink, and, on the other hand, defective decision making still has to be established. This is where we turn to now.



## Chapter 17: Resolving the puzzle of Suez

### 17.1 Introduction

In its meeting of 6 November, the Cabinet decided to agree to a cease-fire. That morning Anglo-French forces had landed near Port Said and were advancing on Ismailia. Three explanations for this decision surface in the Suez literature: (1) The Soviet threat of 5 November to throw nuclear bombs on London, Paris, and Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>, (2) The growing amount of domestic opposition, most evident in a large anti-Suez demonstration in Trafalgar Square on 5 November, and (3) the lack of American support, especially the American refusal to support a British loan from the International Monetary Fund, which was urgently needed because of the run on the pound that had developed since the Anglo-French ultimatum had been issued.

British decisionmakers have always denied that the Soviet threat influenced their decision to halt the invasion<sup>2</sup>. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Union had taken a rather detached attitude towards the conflict right from the start of the Suez crisis<sup>3</sup>. British policymakers had asked, and obtained, American guarantees that the United States would 'take care of the Bear', if necessary. The British Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Sir William Hayter, unaware of this American gesture, thought the Soviet threat 'bullying bluff'<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. O.M. Smolensky, 'Moscow and the Suez Crisis, 1956', Political Science Quarterly, (80), 1965, pp. 581-605.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Eden, Full Circle, pp. 554-556. The records of neither the Cabinet nor the Egypt Committee suggest that British decisionmakers counted on Russian paralysis because of their involvement in Hungary in October and November 1956. Soviet policies are hardly a consideration at all. Those who are interested in the interconnection between the Hungarian and Suez crisis may want to consult: John C. Campbell, 'The Soviet Union, the United States, and the Twin Crises of Hungary and Suez', in Louis and Owen (eds.), Suez 1956, pp. 233-253; Brian McCauley, 'Hungary and Suez, 1956: The Limits of Soviet and American Power', Journal of Contemporary History, (16), 1981, pp. 777-800; the latter, rather intriguing article, is not mentioned in Campbell's sources.

<sup>3</sup> In early August, the British Ambassador to the Soviet Union even suggested that the Soviets 'understood the vital necessity of the Middle East position to us', Hayter to Foreign Office, 7 August 1956, PREM 11/1099. Later that month the Cabinet considered it possible that the Soviet Union might not wish to become too closely involved, CM(56)60, 21 August 1956.

<sup>4</sup> Hayter to Foreign Office, Telegram 1564, 6 November 1956, PREM 11/1170; cf. Sir William Hayter, The Kremlin and the Embassy, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1966. Peter Wright argues that, because MI5 had succeeded in breaking the Egyptian diplomatic code, British policymakers knew of the Soviet intention to intervene, and therefore decided to halt the invasion, Peter Wright, Spycatcher. The Candid Autobiography of a Senior Intelligence Officer, Dell, New York, 1988 (1987), pp. 106-108; Watt shows that the historical evidence contradicts Wright's claim; D. Cameron Watt, 'Fall-Out From Treachery: Peter Wright and the Spycatcher Case', Political Quarterly, (59), 2, 1988, pp. 213-214.

The second explanation may look plausible, but should be qualified. It should be remembered that British Cabinets are first of all concerned with consensus within their own party, rather than with the opposition<sup>5</sup>. Actually, it has been argued that one of the principal American misperceptions has been the mistaken belief that British politics is generally influenced by public opinion, as American politics, rather than by internal party politics<sup>6</sup>. As shown above, two moments of a potential split occurred on 1 and 4 November respectively, and both were resolved satisfactorily. Especially after the unanimous decision of 4 November to continue operations as planned, it was very unlikely that internal dissension could be mounted with the support of a senior Minister. Indeed, on 5 November Eden had won the day in the Commons when he could announce the fall of Port Said in the middle of a difficult debate on British propaganda leaflets: 'the Conservative Members erupted in joy, and Labour looked nonplussed for the first time []'<sup>7</sup>. Notwithstanding the influence of the Soviet reaction and mounting domestic opposition, it seems safe to conclude that the American opposition in the United Nations and their refusal to support Sterling contributed most to the halting of all operations.

The importance of American opposition brings us back to the puzzle of Suez: why did the British Government use force, while it could reasonably have understood that American support would not be forthcoming. Clearly, this lack of anticipation of American opposition counts as a major example of defective decision making. In this chapter, I will demonstrate that this can be explained by the interaction of variables that lie at the individual and small group level, the effect of which is generated by decisions involving high levels of stress, but which are grounded in cognitive patterns that had been established before the outbreak of the crisis situation. British decision making during the Suez crisis can be characterized by at least three symptoms of defective decision making. I contend that their occurrence is heavily intertwined, and that the failure to anticipate American opposition is the central element on which all of them depend.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Lord Beloff, 'The Crisis and its Consequences for the British Conservative Party', in Louis and Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 330.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Neustadt, *Alliance Politics*, Columbia University Press, New York/London, 1970, pp. 80 ff.

<sup>7</sup> James, *Anthony Eden*, p. 572. James was an eyewitness of the debate.

## 17.2 Defective decision making: the importance of American support

The British expectation that American support would be forthcoming is central to understanding the decision making process in Whitehall throughout the crisis. This can be illustrated by two important elements of British decision making during the crisis.

1. The run on Sterling. From mid-September the position of Sterling had weakened<sup>8</sup>. In several internal memoranda that month, Sir Edward Bridges, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, had pointed out to his chief, Macmillan, that Sterling would only survive a military adventure in the case of American support 'and a fairly unified Commonwealth'. If Great Britain and France decided to go it alone, 'we can expect little or nothing' to support the currency<sup>9</sup>. Until mid-October the British currency still seemed strong enough<sup>10</sup>. Shortly before the start of hostilities, however, on 26 October Sir Leslie Rowan, a high Treasury official, warned Macmillan that towards the end of the year British gold and dollar reserves would be below \$2,000 million, 'which has always been regarded as a rather crucial dividing line'<sup>11</sup>. Nevertheless, on 30 October, after Eden had announced the Anglo-French ultimatum in the Commons, a party of Macmillan, Rowan, and Makins, now Under-Secretary at the Treasury, decided not to turn to the I.M.F. for help yet<sup>12</sup>. Indeed, even mounting American opposition at the United Nations did not particularly worry British decision makers: on 2 November, the Defence Transition Committee, where high Treasury officials were present, made the observation that '[ ] while sterling was certainly under strain, this was no more than

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<sup>8</sup> Macmillan told this the Cabinet in a meeting that did not deal with Suez, but with European economic integration, CM(56)66, 18 September 1956. (Because the Cabinet did not discuss the Suez crisis, this meeting, like the meetings on 31 July and 8 October; [CM(56)55, CM(56)69] does not appear in the tables of chapters 10 and 14).

<sup>9</sup> Minute Bridges to Macmillan, T 236/4188, 7 September 1956; Minute Bridges to Macmillan, T 236/4188, 11 September 1956.

<sup>10</sup> On 17 October the Head of the Bank of England had written to Macmillan that 'the [ ] Governors did not manifest any immediate uneasiness about the present position of the sterling', T 236/4188.

<sup>11</sup> Rowan to Macmillan, 26 October 1956, T 236/4188. Diane Kunz suggests that this calculation was made known to Macmillan on 2 November. The fact that it was known before the Challe-plan was executed implies that Great Britain could have started IMF procedures before military operations were to offend the United States; Diane Kunz, 'The Importance of Having Money: The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis', in Louis and Owen (eds.), Suez 1956, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> Note for the record, record of a discussion of Macmillan, Mains, and Rowan on 30 October 1956 at 5 P.M., T 236/4188. As a matter of fact, during the Cabinet meeting that morning, when the decision to issue the ultimatum was formally taken, American economic assistance was discussed and expected, if the Americans were not alienated 'more than was absolutely necessary', CM(56)75, 30 October 1956.

had been expected and no abnormal movements had taken place'<sup>13</sup>. Indeed, an I.M.F. loan was not asked until 5 November. Obviously, British decision makers believed in American support until the Cabinet meeting of 6 November. During that meeting Macmillan obtained information that the United States would not start formal I.M.F.-procedures<sup>14</sup>.

2. Mounting international pressure. British decision makers were highly surprised at the difficulties they encountered at the United Nations while their armada was sailing to Egypt. Part of this surprise can be explained by Eden's conviction that procedures at the Security Council would amount to no more than going through the motions. These ideas, however, were based on the assumption of at least tacit support of the United States. No-one had expected the Americans to lead the opposition against France and Great Britain at the United Nations. The decisive American vote in favour of the Uniting for Peace procedure, which would transfer the debate to the General Assembly, implying continuous pressure on France and Great Britain, baffled British ministers.

The consequences of American refusal of financial and diplomatic support of Anglo-French policy, when the crisis eventually came to a head, reflect the pivotal role American support played in British planning: British policy makers had counted on American support in order to hold out against increased financial strains and mounting international protests. When lack of American support changed into opposition, they realized that it would take the assault force too long to confront the world with a fait accompli. What processes have been at work that blinded British policymakers to the warnings both from the Eisenhower Administration and from their own experts in Washington, such as Ambassador Sir Roger Makins?

### 17.3 Misperceiving the Americans

Throughout the crisis British decision makers remained convinced that the United States would support them if they were to use force in the last resort. At the outset of the crisis they even thought that the Americans would join them and the French in taking military precautions. After the trilateral talks in late July the Egypt Committee took notice of American hesitations, but linked these to joint military measures only, not to possible American opposition to the use of force in general. Consequently, they concluded that the Americans would tacitly approve of an eventual military move. Throughout the crisis British decision makers were nevertheless constantly faced with messages in which the United States

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<sup>13</sup> D(T)C(56)19, 2 November 1956, CAB 134/815.

<sup>14</sup> Macmillan, Riding the Storm, p. 164.

Government expressed strong doubts about the use of force. Three major rationalizations can be traced, at the level of mainly the inner group, but also of the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet, that served at explaining away American opposition to the use of force. All three, however, either disappeared or underwent important change in the period between the last week of September and the middle of October.

1. The Panama Canal parallel. First, American opposition to referring the matter to the United Nations or the International Court of Justice was explained by American fears of the repercussions any such move might have on the international legal position of the Panama Canal. If an international body reconfirmed an international waterway, such as the Suez Canal, to be on Egyptian territory, Panama might start an argument claiming that the territory of international waterway of the Panama Canal might equally be territory of Panama. Once the British Government had decided to refer the matter to the Security Council on 23 September, the parallel was no longer taken into consideration.

2. The role of the American Presidential Elections. Presidential Elections in the United States were due on 6 November. Until mid-October, the British argued that the Americans were reluctant to support the use of force, because President Eisenhower was campaigning as the President of Peace. It would be unfortunate, therefore, if he were to have to associate himself with a major military intervention in the Middle East. American opposition indicated that the British and the French had to wait until after the elections. After the adoption of the Challe-plan, however, this way of reasoning changed completely. It was now argued that if the Eisenhower Administration was confronted with a swift military move in the last days of his election campaign, the President would be unable to take a stand against it<sup>15</sup>.

3. Selective interpretation of the messages from Dulles and Eisenhower. This third form of rationalization came in two varieties: one was the tendency to tailor the interpretation of the messages from Eisenhower and Dulles to the belief that American support would be forthcoming. The second was the habit of distinguishing the messages that Dulles and Eisenhower communicated in public from those that were conveyed in private. Both varieties had a mutually reassuring effect on the members of the inner circle, and were not questioned in either the Egypt Committee or the Cabinet. A major change in this habit occurs towards the middle of October: after the adoption of the Challe-plan Dulles is completely ignored, while during the crisis itself British policymakers prefer to rely on Eisenhower's tacit support, and tend to interpret his messages accordingly.

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<sup>15</sup> Neustadt has explored the argument, but limits his analysis to the second type of rationalization; Richard Neustadt, Alliance Politics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1970, pp. 66-71.

While these various forms of rationalization persisted and underwent important changes, they all share the basic conviction that at least tacit American support would be forthcoming, sooner or later, and that diplomatic moves served at waiting for the right moment. I will first examine the latter two forms of rationalization more in detail. Next, I will show how this perception of the American attitude was the cause of some major faults in the British decision making process.

#### 17.3.1 The American Presidential elections

The argument that electoral motives might be behind American hesitations does not emerge until the beginning of September 1956; this suggests that British policymakers still expected the United States to support the United Kingdom and France until Dulles comes up with the idea of a Users' Association as a means of continuing the negotiation process after a possible failure of the Menzies mission. A shift in argumentation occurs during the first days of October 1956: the importance of American elections was first seen as a date after which the Americans indicated they would be prepared to support Great Britain and France, at least on the diplomatic front; after those days it is interpreted more as a way of once more refraining the British and French from military action. This shift seems connected to a shift in the image the British held of John Foster Dulles and is accompanied by a change of persons who one held to be trustworthy, that is, from Dulles to Eisenhower. At the beginning of September 1956 the British and the French were contemplating to refer the Suez dispute to the Security Council if the Menzies mission to Cairo were to fail. The French and a large number of British decision makers considered this step a prelude to military action. The British, notably Eden and Lloyd, had been in contact with the State Department about this move, but encountered strong opposition against it from Dulles. As a matter of fact, he was to come up with his idea of a Users' Association on 4 September as a way to refrain to British and the French from doing so. At that moment, however, the British wished to keep the French ignorant of that new development, and preferred to deal with Dulles' proposal in secret on their own for a few days until they would be sure that the Americans were committed to it. On 5 September Lloyd saw Pineau in Paris in order to discuss the issue of the Security Council, although he knew of Dulles' new proposal. Pineau emphasized that force should be employed as soon as possible. Lloyd answered that, according to him, Dulles wanted an eventual procedure at the Security Council to be an honest attempt to reach an agreement. Lloyd 'said that Mr. Dulles seemed reasonably determined to impose the will of the 18 nations on Egypt. But he wanted to stop us doing so by force, at all events before the U.S. elections. One could sympathize with his

difficulties. He had said that it would be hard to get even subsidiary economic help to us through Congress before then. Until the elections, Mr. Dulles wanted no force used, unless there was a clear excuse'<sup>16</sup>. Lloyd was not alone in his impression. On 14 September Harold Macmillan wrote down in his diary, contemplating the likelihood of American assistance in putting stronger economic pressure on Egypt: '(-) But I cannot see that we can achieve much this side of 6 November [the American Presidential election]'<sup>17</sup>. Macmillan stuck to his analysis during his visit to Washington on the occasion of a conference of the International Monetary Fund. He used his stay to speak with Dulles, Eisenhower, and Deputy Under-Secretary Robert Murphy. In their conversations he stressed British firmness in their will to use force in the last resort. In his messages to Eden, that were seen by Lloyd as well, Macmillan repeatedly describes his impression that the United States would have backed Great Britain for 100 percent, had there not been an upcoming election: 'I feel sure the President understands our problems about Nasser, but he is, of course, in the same position now as we were in May 1955 [British General election]'<sup>18</sup>. In a record of his conversation with Murphy, Macmillan states that, according to Murphy, the U.S. Government can take no important steps before 6 November<sup>19</sup>. The private character of Macmillan's talk with Eisenhower must have contributed to the idea that the Americans could not say in public what they really thought. Similarly, Macmillan saw Dulles in private on 25 September, after a more formal meeting at which the British ambassador Roger Makins had been present, and reports: '... some of the things he [Dulles] said were very helpful, but might be dangerous to him if they got about in the electioneering atmosphere'<sup>20</sup>.

This impression of being the confidant of Dulles and Eisenhower partly explains why the regular warnings of Ambassador Roger Makins were ignored. Already on 9 September Makins reminded London that the lack of public American support was '... not due to the imminence of the elections, but (-) a normal manifestation of American public opinion'<sup>21</sup>. But even Makins's careful observations allowed the British to stick to their convictions. Referring to

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<sup>16</sup> FO 800/740, Papers of Selwyn Lloyd.

<sup>17</sup> Harold Macmillan, *Riding the Storm, 1956-1959*, Macmillan, London, etc., 1971, p. 127.

<sup>18</sup> FO 800/740 Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Macmillan to Eden, Telegram 2004, 25 September 1956.

<sup>19</sup> FO 371/120343, Record of a conversation between Mr. Macmillan, Mr. Makins and Mr. Murphy, AU 1057/1, 29 September 1956.

<sup>20</sup> FO 800/740 Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Macmillan to Eden, Telegram 2003, 25 September 1956.

<sup>21</sup> FO 800/740 Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Makins to Lloyd, Telegram 1849, 9 September 1956.

Eisenhower's re-election campaign Makins wrote to Lloyd on 17 September that '... it remains true that the great Republican trump card (-), is peace (-). So (-) there is in my judgment no prospect, as the international outlook appears today, that the U.S. will themselves participate in military action before November 6'<sup>22</sup>. In fact, this analysis allowed Lloyd to explain away Eisenhower's lack of support for Dulles' tough speeches at the two London Conferences. '[Eisenhower] had made no effort to make Nasser understand that he was in for trouble if he did not agree to a reasonable settlement. Eisenhower's mind was concentrated on an election campaign, appearing as the candidate who could preserve the peace of the world'<sup>23</sup>.

In those days when it seemed that the Americans could be persuaded to take a firm line with Nasser by supporting a strong S.C.U.A., the British preferred to ignore Pineau's warnings that the Americans could not be trusted at all and that they would make the British and the French wait with the use of force until after the election 'which could mean that we should never be able to take such action at all'<sup>24</sup>. In the beginning of October, however, when at a press conference Dulles declared that S.C.U.A. was not supposed to have any real teeth, and moreover described British and French policies over Egypt as old fashioned colonialism, perceptions at Whitehall took a different course: Dulles' suggestions were suddenly defined as opposite to British interests. On 6 October Eden wrote to Selwyn Lloyd, who was in New York in order to defend the British case before the Security Council: 'I think we must never forget that Dulles' purpose is different from ours. The Canal is in no sense vital to the U.S. and his game is to string us along at least until Polling Day ...'<sup>25</sup>.

It has been alluded to several times that this period is crucial in understanding the course British decision making was about to take. Eden seemed fed up with Dulles' ambiguity and his reluctance to commit the United States to a structure of the Users' Association that would be able to put pressure on Egypt in case of alleged misbehaviour by withholding canal dues. Eden expressed his fear that time was running out. In a letter to Lloyd he states, commenting on the latter's account of negotiations at the United Nations: '... it made me fear more than ever that our position is being eroded (-). We have been misled so often by Dulles' ideas that we cannot afford to risk another misunderstanding (-). Time is not on our side in this matter.

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<sup>22</sup> FO 800/740 Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Makins to Lloyd, Telegram 1942, 17 September 1956.

<sup>23</sup> Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, p. 168. On the same page Lloyd says 'that he had done it for electioneering reason was confirmed when I read again, whilst writing this book, an opinion sent to us from Washington on 17th September by Roger Makins'.

<sup>24</sup> PREM 11/1100, Jebb to Foreign Office, Telegram 295, 9 September 1956.

<sup>25</sup> FO 800/741 Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Eden to Lloyd, Telegram 1063, 6 October 1956.



I am glad you are standing firm with the French and so stiffening Dulles. That is the only way to a solution'<sup>26</sup>. At this point Eden seemed worried that soon he would no longer be able to back this diplomatic effort by threatening with military action, as since 2 October the British Chiefs of Staff had been working on the Winter Plan. It is unlikely that Eden just wanted to go ahead with military action at that stage, as the meeting between the French General Maurice Challe and Eden, at which the first steps on the path to collusion with Israel were to be made, did not take place until 14 October.

The election argument no longer surfaces after the Challe visit of 14 October. Pineau suggests that on 16 October, when Eden and Lloyd flew to Paris for talks that were related to Challe's presentation, Eden showed Mollet and Pineau a message from Eisenhower which said that it would be better for the British and the French to wait with military action until after the elections; to which Pineau claims to have responded that elections did not make a difference at all<sup>27</sup>. Indeed, when Pineau returned to London on October, 23, the French Foreign Secretary, Eden, and Lloyd concluded that the Americans would be too busy because of the elections: it would thus be best to act now<sup>28</sup>.

The Cabinet minutes show that on 25 October, when the Cabinet discussed the contingency of an Israeli invasion of Egypt, the argumentation of Eden and Lloyd had completely changed. In spite of objections that 'there was no prospect of securing the support or approval of the United States Government', Eden argued that the U.S. Government would support an Anglo-French operation to separate the fighting parties and secure the Canal, as it would be defensible in international law and as '... the United States had acted in conformity with these principles on many occasions in the last hundred years'<sup>29</sup>. The American Presidential elections were of no concern to the Cabinets held between 18 October and 6 November. This can be explained by the self-deceiving idea that a policing action in the Suez Canal area would be evidently defensible under international law.

The election argument mainly appears in the evaluations of those members of the inner circle who directly contacted leading American politicians: Lloyd with Dulles, Eden with Eisenhower, Macmillan with both of them. This confirms the existence of a small group of

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<sup>26</sup> FO 800/741 Selwyn Lloyd Papers, Eden to Lloyd, Telegram 1078, 8 October 1956.

<sup>27</sup> Christian Pineau, *1956 Suez*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1976, pp. 124-125. No mentioning of this in the accounts of this meeting by Eden, *Full Circle*, pp. 510-514, nor in Lloyd, *Suez*, pp. 173-175.

<sup>28</sup> This can be concluded from Lloyd's minute to himself in which he summarizes the talks on 23 October; FO 800/725.

<sup>29</sup> Quotations from CAB 128/30, CM(56)74, 25 October 1956.

decision makers, more restricted than the Egypt Committee, liable to symptoms of Groupthink: in spite of contradicting evidence, Eden, Lloyd and Macmillan reassured each other in their belief that the Americans were willing to support them if only the elections would be out of the way. The misperception is corrected when Dulles' statements on S.C.U.A. and colonialism provoke a deep sentiment of disillusion among members of the inner circle. It did not lead, however, to a correction of the false belief; on the contrary, it led to a further closing off of the already severely limited perceptiveness of British decision makers, and to the interruption of consultations with the Americans about further plans.

### 17.3.2 Separating messages from Dulles and Eisenhower

Throughout the crisis both Dulles and Eisenhower expressed their strong reluctance to the use of force. However, they never explicitly told the British that they would not approve of it, or even oppose it. Both had hoped to take the sting out of the wasp by exploiting every possible diplomatic means, thus postponing the decision to intervene as long as possible so that a satisfactory diplomatic settlement could be worked out. Unfortunately, one confusing element appeared in their communications with the British: they persisted in approving of Anglo-French military precautions, first, because they genuinely thought this would put Nasser under pressure to reach a satisfactory agreement, and, second, because they did not want to alienate their allies too much. This element offered British policy makers ample room to misinterpret the messages from the Eisenhower Administration. This misconstruction came in three varieties: one was to engage in misreading, whenever an American message was received. The second was thinking that Dulles and Eisenhower could be considered apart. The third was to make a distinction between private and public utterances of Dulles and Eisenhower. The eventual consequence would be a tragical misinterpretation of the American attitude at the height of the crisis.

a) Misreading messages. Two important examples of misreading occurred during the crisis. (1) When Dulles arrived in London on 1 August, for trilateral discussions, he carried a letter from Eisenhower to Eden. Dulles had noticed himself that Eisenhower's letter contained an important ambiguity as to the purpose of holding an international conference. He therefore handed over his own interpretation of that passage, in order to avoid misunderstandings. As it happened, Eden preferred to believe Eisenhower's words and concluded: 'The President did not rule out the use of force'. (2) When on 5 September Eisenhower made a statement to the American Press in which he declared to be committed to

a peaceful settlement of the dispute, Macmillan made an effort to read into that statement the conclusion that Eisenhower still did not exclude military force, in the last resort<sup>30</sup>.

b) Separating Dulles and Eisenhower. In his letter of 3 September the American President had already told Eden that he thought military force would not be needed in order to make Nasser give way. In the margin on this letter, Eden scribbled 'Foster advocated going on' [taking military precautions and making military plans]<sup>31</sup>. This reflects the tendency to explain away unwelcome news by relying on what Dulles had said.

c) Separating public and private utterances. British policymakers, especially, Eden, Lloyd, Macmillan, and Salisbury, met with Dulles in private during the trilateral talks, the London Conference, and the S.C.U.A. conference. Moreover, Macmillan met both Dulles and Eisenhower in private when he travelled to Washington for a meeting of the I.M.F.. Furthermore, Sir Roger Makins, British Ambassador to the United States, communicated the contents of several talks he had with Dulles, which left room for being misconstrued by policymakers in Whitehall. British policymakers were thus able to believe that private American statements were of more value than public utterances.

For instance, Eisenhower's letter of 8 September which strongly discouraged the use of force, was handed over to Makins by Dulles. In a subsequent telegram, Makins conveyed Dulles's accompanying words, which went much further than the contents of the President's letter: Dulles thought it possible to occupy several key points along the Canal. Moreover, he added that the President did not rule out the use of force in the last resort. This phrase was immediately marked by Eden with his pencil<sup>32</sup>. Especially, Macmillan's visit to the White House and to Dulles's has been crucial in this respect. Macmillan was convinced that the United States would tacitly support an Anglo-French move against Nasser. He told this to Eden when he came back in early October. More than that, his opinion carried much weight because in a meeting between Eden, Lloyd, and himself, he insisted, when Lloyd warned of Dulles's intransigence: 'I had a few words with Ike. Of course he's an ill man, but as brave as ever.

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<sup>30</sup> Macmillan thought that '[ ] read carefully, the last phrase could be interpreted to refer only to present undertakings', Riding the Storm, pp. 116-117.

<sup>31</sup> Letter Eisenhower to Eden, 3 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>32</sup> Washington Embassy to Foreign Office, Telegram 1839, 8 September 1956, PREM 11/1100. This telegram raises doubts about Thomas's claim that Eden did believe Eisenhower's letter to have been written by Dulles, allegedly saying: 'the only thing that's true to Ike in that is his signature and that's illegible', The Suez Affair, pp. 77-78.

□ I don't think there is going to be any trouble from Ike-he and I understand each other-he's not going to make any real trouble if we have to do something drastic"<sup>33</sup>.

The latter episode illustrates the break that occurred in the first two weeks of October: British policymakers increasingly ignored the American Secretary of State and directed their attention to Eisenhower instead, relying on Macmillan's assurances that the President was with them. After the adoption of the Challe-plan, contacts with the United States were broken off, the British continued planning on the assumption that tacit American approval was forthcoming. This would eventually lead to a fatal misinterpretation of Eisenhower's messages when France and Great Britain issued their ultimatum to Israel and Egypt, by itself a perfect example of how private and public American messages were given a different meaning.

When the news broke of the Israeli invasion of Egypt, British policymakers had to re-open the lines of communication with Washington that had been sealed off since mid-October. The exchange of letters between Eden and Eisenhower that followed is usually presented as yet another example of Eden's incapacity to appreciate clear English sentences that precluded any American support for military adventures. In the context of collective rationalization, however, it is explicable why Eden thought limited American support to be forthcoming. It is too simple to suggest that Eden was acting foolishly.

Anglo-American understanding was severely damaged by the fact that Eden sent a message to Eisenhower about the contents of his speech to the House of Commons only three hours beforehand. Eisenhower therefore had to learn of the French and British ultimatum to Egypt and Israel from press reports. Much has since been made of Eisenhower's 'stunningly cold and formal message which he went so far as to release to the press', which was addressed to "Dear Prime Minister" instead of 'Dear Anthony', and which was signed "Sincerely, Dwight D. Eisenhower" and not with the usual "warm regards, as ever, Ike E."<sup>34</sup>

It is generally accepted that Eisenhower wanted to snub Eden in public and that Eden should have understood the American position once and for all<sup>35</sup>. The interesting phenomenon, however, is that Eden did not feel humiliated at all, and, for a while, remained convinced of limited American support. In order to sustain his perception, he separated the

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<sup>33</sup> Horne, *Macmillan, 1894-1956*, pp. 433-434; Horne quotes William Clark as his source and traces the conversation back to 24/25 October. Clark must have been told by Lloyd because Clark's diaries indicate that Clark came back from a fortnight's leave on 29 October.

<sup>34</sup> David Carlton, *Britain and the Suez Crisis*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1988, p. 70; the letter appears in Robert Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden*, MacMillan, London, 1986, p. 543.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., Neff, *Warriors at Suez*, pp. 371-373.

private messages of the President from the public ones, and he was not alone in doing so. That Tuesday, 30 October 1956, several messages between Eden and Eisenhower crossed each other<sup>36</sup>, thus forming a source of misunderstanding. It is important to realize that, when Eden sent his telegram in which he explained why he was 'asking for Port Said and Ismailia and Suez'<sup>37</sup>, he had not yet received Eisenhower's second message of that day. When that telegram reached Eden, it spoke a rather cautious language: 'it seems obvious that your Government and ours hold somewhat different attitudes toward the Tripartite Declaration of 1950. In any event I shall earnestly and even anxiously watch the unfolding situation'<sup>38</sup>. Shortly afterwards, the American Ambassador Aldrich delivered Ike's 'cold and formal' message to Eden over the phone, which clearly had been written without Eisenhower having read Eden's explanatory note. It is very likely that Eden understood that Eisenhower was angry by having had to learn the news from the press, but not necessarily that the President was completely opposed to his policy.

First, many authors have underlined that Eden, by issuing the ultimatum, had opted for a course of action that contradicted the 1950 Tripartite Declaration that was still fully supported by the United States. The Declaration was, as a matter of fact, subject of Ike's second letter to Eden on 30 October 1956<sup>39</sup>. This Declaration, issued in 1950 by Great Britain, France and the United States, said that they would try and balance the flow of arms to Israel and Arab countries and would seek each other's advice if either party crossed the 1948 armistice lines. As Aronson shows, however, this declaration had never been an instrument for the enforcement of the territorial status quo, but rather a justification for weapon delivery to all parties in the region<sup>40</sup>. As a matter of fact, when Eden visited Washington as Prime Minister in January 1956, Dulles had told him that the declaration was in itself no assurance that the United States would honour its commitment to enforce the

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<sup>36</sup> Most messages are printed in full length in Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis, Appendix I, pp. 125-129.

<sup>37</sup> PREM 11/1100, Eden to Eisenhower, 30 October 1956, T 491/56; Carlton, Britain and the Suez Crisis, p. 129.

<sup>38</sup> PREM 11/1100, Eisenhower to Eden, 30 October 1956, T 487/56; Carlton, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>39</sup> Carlton, op. cit., p. 178; Thomas, The Suez Affair, pp. 137-138; Carlton, Anthony Eden. A Biography, pp. 444-445.

<sup>40</sup> Geoffrey Aronson, From Sideshow to Center Stage. U.S. Policy toward Egypt 1946-1956, Lynne Rienner, Boulder Colorado, 1986, p. 169.

territorial status quo<sup>41</sup>. It is therefore not unlikely that Eden did not give that much weight to Eisenhower's paragraphs that asked for respect for the Tripartite Declaration.

Second, and more importantly, Eden chose to separate Eisenhower's private messages from Ike's public statement that Tuesday. This is revealed by Eden's message of 31 October<sup>42</sup>. It is instructive to quote it at full length.

'I have received your formal message, and I see that its substance has already been published. I realise that you wrote in this way in order to avoid encroaching upon the confidential nature of our personal exchanges. But, in the view of the publicity given to it, I shall be obliged in our Parliamentary discussions, which are to be resumed tomorrow, to comment on some of the points made in your letter in order to justify British policy and action. For this purpose, I think I must be free to make public the substance, though not, of course, the full text, of the two messages which I sent to you in the course of today. I am sure you will understand'<sup>43</sup>.

This letter shows that Eden thought Eisenhower's public statement was to be interpreted differently from their private correspondence. It suggests that he thought the American President somehow had to say nasty things about the British for domestic purposes, but that he tacitly agreed with the British point of view, given his relatively accommodating earlier messages<sup>44</sup>. All the more because Eisenhower responded to Eden on the same day with a short note stating: 'By all means, feel free to use any part of the exchanges between us that you see fit'<sup>45</sup>. What else could Eden conclude than that he 'had no reason at this moment [30 October 1956] to suppose that the United States would oppose us at the United Nations upon almost every point'<sup>46</sup>. One could suggest that this misperception, consistently sustained

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<sup>41</sup> 'Memo of Conversation: Eden Talks', p. 9, Declassified Documents, -78, Reference 283B, quoted in Aronson, op. cit., pp. 169-170.

<sup>42</sup> This message is mentioned neither by Carlton, nor by James or Little, even though Eden in his memoirs vaguely alludes to it; Eden, Full Circle, p. 528.

<sup>43</sup> PREM 11/1100, Eden to Eisenhower, 31 October 1956, T 492/56. Underlining in the original.

<sup>44</sup> It is peculiar that so little attention has been paid to the telegram exchange between Eden and Eisenhower in the last days of October 1956. Maybe because they do not seem to make any sense at all, unless they are framed in a cognitive psychological explanation of British perceptions of American attitudes. The only author to my knowledge who has alluded to this episode is Henri Azeau, who stresses that Eisenhower's letter of 30 October 1956 did not ask the British not to pursue the military line, and who argues that Ike played 'bon prince', and tacitly accepted the announced occupation of Port Said: 'La tolérance est claire, précise. Et limitée'; Henri Azeau, Le piège de Suez. 5 Novembre 1956, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1964, pp. 266, 303-304.

<sup>45</sup> PREM 11/1100 Eisenhower to Eden, 31 October 1956, Telegram 494/56.

<sup>46</sup> Eden, op. cit., p. 528.

throughout the early days of the Sinai war, was another example of Eden's idiosyncrasy. The draft of Eden's message to Eisenhower, however, reveals that the underlined parts of the draft were added as 'amendments suggested by the Chancellor of the Exchequer'<sup>47</sup>. This suggests that the interpretation of the American attitude to the British and French ultimatum was not as much a product of the obscure thinking of one individual, but the result of cognitive processes among more than one British decision maker<sup>48</sup>.

#### 17.4 The consequences of counting on American support

The British had thus made themselves believe that American support would be forthcoming. No-one anticipated their active opposition at the United Nations or obstruction of I.M.F.-procedures that would give some relieve to the falling British currency. British hopes lasted until the very moment troops would go ashore. Some doubts appear in Eden's message to Eisenhower of 4 November:

'We would be happy to hand over to an international organisation as soon as we possibly can. No-one feels more strongly about this than Harold who has to provide the money []. I am sending you this message in the hope that you will at least understand the grievous decisions we have had to make. I was deeply moved by your last message before our military action, although I was not able to reply to it as I would have liked it at the time. If you cannot approve, I would like you at least to understand the terrible decisions that we have had to make'<sup>49</sup>.

Throughout the crisis until the last moment British politicians remained fairly confident that the Americans would eventually support them in resorting to force. By consequence, when faced with painful short-term dilemmas, such as an equivocal outcome of the London Conference, they reasoned that the time was not yet ripe for military intervention backed by the United States, unless it could be justified under international law. It therefore comes as no surprise that the urge to keep intact the belief in eventual American support was the source of three major elements of defective decision making: (1) the failure to examine the risks and drawbacks of the preferred course of action, (2) the avoidance of experts' opinions as well as

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<sup>47</sup> PREM 11/1100, Eden to Eisenhower, draft, 31 October 1956.

<sup>48</sup> As a matter of fact, these interpretations were shared by various officials at the Foreign Office: on 1 November Evelyn Shuckburgh, now Director of the Imperial War College, walked over to the Foreign Office 'to find out what there was to be said on the other side'; Dean told him that '[t]he world at large is screaming blue murder but (a) Eisenhower's statement was reasonably mild and (b) Australia and New Zealand support us', Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez*, pp. 363-4, emphasis mine.

<sup>49</sup> Eden to Eisenhower, Telegram 520/56, 4 November 1956, despatched 5 November 1956, 4 A.M., PREM 11/1100.

the biased interpretation of available expert knowledge, (3) the failure to clearly spell out objectives.

#### 17.4.1 No examination of risks and drawbacks: the withdrawal of the pilots.

At the beginning of August the Company employed 205 pilots, who helped pass ships through the Canal, 61 of which were British, 53 French, 40 Egyptian, and 51 others. Fifty-eight of these were on leave and had indicated that they did not want to return to Egypt to serve under the newly installed Egyptian Canal Authority<sup>30</sup>.

The decision to withdraw the pilots was taken in order to create a pretext for military intervention that should be acceptable even to the Americans. Dulles' plan for a users' association meant further diplomatic delay. In this period British decision makers started arguing that the United States wanted them to wait until after the Presidential elections. Creating chaos in the Canal would constitute a legitimate basis for action. However, in doing so they faced perceived the following dilemma: on the one hand, they wanted to slap Nasser in the face by withdrawing all non-Egyptian pilots. In this way, it would be shown to the world that Egypt was unable to operate the Canal in a decent way. On the other hand, one did not want to bring traffic to a halt, as they would be accused of having caused the effective closure of the Canal, while the very reason why they were opposing Nasser's move had been the grievance that Egyptian rule could not guarantee the effective flow of traffic<sup>31</sup>. British ministers failed in their appreciation of the role of Western pilots. As a matter of fact, either aspect of this dilemma started from the assumption that withdrawal could bring the traffic in the Canal to a standstill. After the eventual departure of the non-Egyptian pilots, faithful to their Company, it appeared that the Egyptians were perfectly capable of managing the Canal: on 16 September they let pass 40 ships - more than the average number<sup>32</sup>.

In his memoirs Eden suggests that the British and French Governments had constantly urged the pilots to stay<sup>33</sup>. This, however, is only part of the truth. The possible withdrawal

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<sup>30</sup> Hugh Thomas, The Suez Affair, p. 79.

<sup>31</sup> The dilemma is most clearly stated by Minister of Transport, Harold Watkinson, in the Cabinet meeting of 23 August, CM(56)61, but also in a telegram sent from the Foreign Office to its Cairo Embassy on 7 August, in which withdrawal of the pilots was considered 'incompatible with our policy of avoiding the odium of interfering with the operation of the Canal', PREM 11/1099.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, The Suez Affair, p. 87; for an account of how Nasser organized the effective operation of the Canal, see Mohammed Heikal, Cutting the Lion's Tail. Suez Through Egyptian Eyes, London, André Deutsch, 1986, p. 153.

<sup>33</sup> Eden, Full Circle, pp. 467-468.



of the pilots was always seen as a possible useful instrument of putting pressure on Nasser. Each time the Egypt Committee faced an important step to take, the weapon was mentioned. Two such critical moments occurred: the first during the second week of August when the British faced the possibility of Egypt rejecting the outcome of the London Conference altogether. The second moment came when Dulles presented the users' association as a way of avoiding a crisis as a consequence of the failure of the Menzies mission. At both instances, British policymakers considered withdrawal of the pilots as a way to bring matters to a head, because they assumed the Egyptians would not be able to guarantee the operation of the Canal<sup>54</sup>.

The puzzling aspect is that right from the beginning of the crisis it was known that a very small number of pilots, or no pilots at all, would be needed to help ships sail through the Canal. On 29 July Selwyn Lloyd, in a discussion with the American envoy Robert Murphy and the French Foreign Secretary Christian Pineau, had agreed '[] that it would be possible to continue operating the Canal without pilots. Risks would be increased, but most masters would be capable of taking their ship through in their own'<sup>55</sup>. This consideration was discussed even in the Egypt Committee's meeting of 14 August, when it was concluded that 'the withdrawal of all French and British pilots would not necessarily bring a halt to all the movement of shipping through the Suez Canal []'<sup>56</sup>. Still, it remains curious that no-one followed up on this analysis. Indeed, no doubts were raised at the next meeting two days later<sup>57</sup>. As long as one was able to procrastinate a decision by pointing out that it would be better to wait and see how the London Conference would develop, there was no urgency in re-examining one's assumptions. By the time tension was rising, which first occurs towards the end of the London Conference around 21 August, every reason to re-examine had disappeared because of the perceived need to do something in order not to let Nasser get away with the Canal. The following 3 days were characterized by the search for a casus belli to which aim the standstill of the operation of the Canal seemed a useful instrument. William Clark notes in his diary on

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<sup>54</sup> This analysis is sustained by meetings of the Cabinet, the Defence (Transition) Committee and the Egypt Committee, as well as in telegrams from the Foreign Office: CM(56)54, 27 July 1956, CM(56)61, 23 August 1956, D(T)C (56)2, 27 July 1956, EC(56)16, 16 August 1956, EC(56)25, 7 September 1956, Foreign Office Telegram 3420 to various Embassies on 30 July 1956, and Foreign Office to Cairo Embassy, 7 August 1956, PREM 11/1099.

<sup>55</sup> Record of a conversation between Mr. Murphy, M. Pineau and Mr. Lloyd, 29 July 1956, PREM 11/1098.

<sup>56</sup> EC(56)15, Confidential Annex, 14 August 1956, PREM 11/1104.

<sup>57</sup> EC(56)16, 16 August 1956.

23 August, that '[a] good deal of effort now is going into trying to find a proper pretext for taking military action'<sup>58</sup>. Tension was temporarily lessened when Monckton spoke up against the use of force in the Egypt Committee on 24 August, urging to take to matter to the United Nations before taking military action.

Pressure was rising, however, immediately after Dulles launched his idea of a users' association. Moreover, the Suez Canal Company had become impatient: it was supposed to hand over its pilots, facilities and knowledge to the users' club, and therefore was not overly happy to see itself being outmanoeuvred by Dulles's proposal, and thus had an interest in the occurrence of disorder in the Canal. On 9 September the British Ambassador to France, Sir Gladwyn Jebb, reported that Pineau was urging the British Government to have the pilots withdrawn before Dulles would come up with another bright idea which could make the pilots have to stay on<sup>59</sup>. On 6 September the news broke through internally that Nasser had rejected the proposals put forward to him by the Menzies mission. The next day the Egypt Committee '[ ] reached the conclusion that matters must now be left to their course and that no further advice should be given to the employees of the Suez Canal Company'<sup>60</sup>. In a communication on 11 September the Suez Canal Company advised its pilots to leave Egypt.

Nasser's success in managing the Canal was a bitter disappointment to the British and French Governments, but could have been avoided if due consideration had been given to the possibility that only a few or even no pilots at all would be enough to help ships sail through the Canal. It is unknown whether one actually relied on the expertise of the Suez Canal Company. Its Director, Georges-Picot, denies to have ever suggested that the Egyptians would be unable to operate the Canal on their own<sup>61</sup>, but it appears from the documents that no independent advice was sought<sup>62</sup>.

It is curious that even after Nasser had proven to be perfectly capable of managing the Canal, British decision makers persisted in the correctness of their assumption. On 17

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<sup>58</sup> Clark, 'Whitehall diary', entry 23 August 1956, p. 119.

<sup>59</sup> Jebb to Foreign Office, Telegram 294, 9 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>60</sup> EC(56)25, 7 September 1956.

<sup>61</sup> J. Georges-Picot, *La véritable crise de Suez*, Paris, 1975, quoted in Marc Ferro, *Suez. Naissance d'un Tiers Monde*, 1956, *Mémoire du Siècle*, Editions Complexe, Bruxelles, 1982, pp. 61-62.

<sup>62</sup> Eden himself reports that '[t]he Suez Canal Company doubted the technical capacity of the Egyptians to widen and deepen the canal and accommodate the large oil tankers and heavy traffic of the future', *Full Circle*, p. 428. Of course, this does not show that the Company thought the Egyptians incapable of running the Canal.

September a Cabinet committee chaired by Harold Macmillan observed that the withdrawal of the non-Egyptian pilots had had no result so far. It was admitted that '[ ] it was possible that the difficulties of pilotage had been exaggerated' but serious difficulties in operating the Canal were expected to arise within a few days<sup>63</sup>. That afternoon voices in the Egypt Committee suggested to increase the number of ships in the Canal in order to complicate the flow of traffic<sup>64</sup>. Only when the Egyptians proved able to manage the Canal for another week, was the assumption of Egyptian incapacity finally replaced by external complications: the Cabinet concluded on September 26 that 'under bad weather conditions, which might occur shortly, the operation of the Canal might be expected to become less efficient'<sup>65</sup>. As a matter of fact, traffic was not to be interrupted until the Anglo-French intervention started.

The story of the pilots is a major example of groupthink: doubts as to the underlying assumption were known to Selwyn Lloyd right from the beginning of the crisis; reservations were expressed in the Egypt Committee meeting of 14 August; and yet, no-one had the courage to raise the issue or to ask for expert knowledge, each time when the withdrawal of pilots was considered a way out of a difficult situation. As long as international negotiations continued, procrastination of a decision was the most attractive temporary solution to the perceived dilemma of teasing Nasser and offending international public opinion. But the more time constraints were perceived, the more attractive it became to hold on to the assumption of Egyptian inability. One week later, Dulles's obscure move of a users' club, coupled with pressure from the French and the Suez Canal Company, triggered off the decision to give it a try.

#### 17.4.2 Failure to look for and listen to outside experts: the use of international law

The British Government is equipped with a special organization that should provide the Government with legal advice: the Law Officers. Moreover, the Foreign Office itself has a similar branch, at the time of Suez headed by Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice. It is clear that during the crisis the Egypt Committee was seldom confronted with the views of the Government's legal advisers. As a matter of fact, the presentation of legal advice was mostly in the hands of the Lord Chancellor, Kilmuir. Moreover, the way in which legal advice was sought and considered suggests the existence of further evidence that (1) decision making during Suez was

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<sup>63</sup> CAB 130/120, 'Committee: "The Suez Canal: Problems Arising From The Diversion Of Shipping"', 17 September 1956.

<sup>64</sup> EC(56)29, 17 September 1956.

<sup>65</sup> CM(56)67, 26 September 1956.

dominated by an inner circle, even smaller than the Egypt Committee, in which Lord Kilmuir played an important role; (2) that legal advice was serving the purpose (a) of finding a way out of a perceived choice dilemma and (b) of rallying both public opinion and internal dissenters behind a tough policy line.

Kilmuir's central role in the inner circle becomes clear from a letter by Fitzmaurice to his colleagues at the legal department of the Foreign Office at 1 November, when it had become clear that the United Kingdom had started employing force against Egypt<sup>66</sup>. He stated that both he and the deputy legal adviser at the Foreign Office, F.A. Vallat, had resisted the use of force:

'there are a number of minutes, notes and papers to that effect, some at least of which have been seen by the Foreign Secretary, and at least one of which formed the basis of a paper for the Cabinet Committee on Suez, which means that it was seen by the principal Ministers concerned. The Prime Minister has however taken his advice on the matter from the Lord Chancellor and virtually all the legal argument which the Government have put forward on the question of the use of force, and which I have constantly queried, have emanated from that quarter'.

Fitzmaurice added that throughout the crisis he had never been consulted on the matter by the Lord Chancellor<sup>67</sup>.

At its first meeting after Nasser's act of nationalizing the Canal Company on 27 July, the Cabinet judged that the very act of nationalization was unlikely to be illegal as Nasser had promised compensation for the Company's shareholders. The reaction of the British Government was therefore thought to be better grounded in aspects of international law<sup>68</sup>. Three different questions had to be answered throughout the crisis: first, whether Nasser's act constituted a breach of international law; second, whether his action justified a military reply; and finally, whether a resort to force required explicit permission of the United Nations. The first two of these legal questions were dealt with from the very beginning, the latter recurring throughout the entire crisis period; the third matter was a point of discussion notably in the period during which the Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies and his delegation were received by Nasser (3 September 1956) and the British Cabinet faced the dilemma of what to do if the Menzies mission were to fail to produce a satisfactory result.

1. A breach of international law ? On 28 July the legal advisers at the Foreign Office presented their doubts whether the nationalization of the Canal Company was a violation of

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<sup>66</sup> The previous day the Royal Air Force had bombed targets in Egypt.

<sup>67</sup> Letter from Fitzmaurice to all his colleagues, 1 November 1956, FO 800/748.

<sup>68</sup> CM (56) 54, 27 July 1956.

the letter the 1888 Constantinople Convention which secured the international character of the Canal. Possibly, it meant a breach of the Convention's spirit, but it was unlikely that military action could thus be justified. Certain economic and diplomatic moves were allowed under international law, but from the outset the legal advisers made it clear that the Canal Company was not permitted to call back the people it employed in running the canal<sup>69</sup>. This document was probably seen by Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd, but did not reach the Egypt Committee, nor the Cabinet. What did reach the Egypt Committee on 1 August was a one-page document, probably drafted by the Lord Chancellor himself<sup>70</sup>, after having been discussed by a meeting of ministers held on the evening of 31 July 1956<sup>71</sup>. It was concluded first, that Egypt used the threat of force to keep British and French subjects working in the canal, that Egypt therefore admitted that it could not operate the Canal in accordance with the 1888 Convention obligations, and second, that the act of nationalization itself was a breach of international law.

These conclusions differed considerably from those reached by the legal advisers at the Foreign Office at 28 July. Legal Adviser Fitzmaurice inquired with Attorney General Manningham-Buller after his opinion. Their correspondence on 1 and 2 August shows that both agreed that the Lord Chancellor's conclusions about an Egyptian threat to employees and the operation of the Canal itself could not be upheld. Manningham-Buller told Fitzmaurice that he had sent a letter to the Foreign Secretary expressing his views for use in the Commons debate on 2 August<sup>72</sup>. It is known, however, that Selwyn Lloyd used the Lord Chancellor's draft instead, which Kilmuir had handed to him at the Cabinet meeting of 31 July<sup>73</sup>. The

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<sup>69</sup> FO 800/747, 28 July 1956.

<sup>70</sup> This was drafted after a meeting on 31 July 1956 with Attorney-General Sir Reginald Manningham-Buller, Solicitor-General, Sir Harry Hylton-Foster, and F.A. Vallat; LCO 2/5760, LO 2/825, quoted by Geoffrey Marston, 'Armed intervention in the 1956 Suez Canal crisis: the legal advice tendered to the British Government', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, (37), 4, 1988, p. 779.

<sup>71</sup> Marston states that a meeting of ministers was held on the evening of 31 July 1956 and that the paper was circulated in the Egypt Committee on 1 August 1956, Marston 'Legal advice', *ibid.*, p. 779. The records show that there was an Egypt Committee meeting at 31 July 1956 at 10 P.M.. Given the fact that according to the records Lord Kilmuir did not start attending the Egypt Committee meetings until 14 August 1956 (although he was present at Cabinet meetings, of course), we must conclude that a top level informal meeting has taken place that evening.

<sup>72</sup> Marston, *ibid.*, pp. 780-781.

<sup>73</sup> CAB 21/3314. The Cabinet meeting on 31 July 1956 did not deal with Suez, CM(56)55. Marston says that a note at the Law Officers' Department stated that Kilmuir agreed to Manningham-Buller's  
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British Government therefore was not exposed to the possibility that Egypt did not pose a threat to the Canal and its pilots, nor to Fitzmaurice's opinion that it might not even have breached the 1888 Convention. Nevertheless, considerations of international law were hardly made during the first days of the crisis when the British and the French were considering a quick military move either by airborne troops or by an invasion from Libya.

2. Is military action justified? The question of justification of military action became important when the British Government was facing the contingencies of a possible failure of the Menzies mission to Egypt. This period starts with the decision of the London Conference at 23 August to send Menzies to Nasser until 12 September when the British Government formally adopted Dulles's proposal for a Users' Association (SCUA). The dilemma was what to do if Nasser did not give in completely. Would military action then be justified, or should one first go to the United Nations?

From mid-August Fitzmaurice had tried to communicate to those who mattered that the use of military force was not justified under international law. He wrote to that effect to Deputy Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Harold Caccia, on 13 August, twice to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office on 29 and 31 August, and to the Permanent Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's department on 6 September in hope to reach the ears of Kilmuir<sup>74</sup>. It is unlikely that Fitzmaurice's warnings would reach the Egypt Committee, or Selwyn Lloyd, through Kirkpatrick, during the crisis had expressed his disappointment with the lawyers' interpretation of international law<sup>75</sup>. Kilmuir was not likely to discuss in detail Fitzmaurice's point of view at the Egypt Committee or Cabinet. From the very beginning he had argued within the Cabinet and with the Law Officers that force was permissible under international law<sup>76</sup>. Fitzmaurice's letter to Caccia of 13 August actually reached Selwyn Lloyd and it may have had its influence on the paper the Foreign Secretary prepared for the meeting of the Egypt Committee on 20 August. This presented a survey of possible Egyptian actions that might justify military action. Selwyn Lloyd pointed out that

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<sup>73</sup>(...continued)

views to be circulated to the Egypt Committee, *ibid.*, p. 780, note 25, but no evidence exists that this was actually done.

<sup>74</sup> Marston, *ibid.*, pp. 783-7.

<sup>75</sup> Kirkpatrick was very critical of the position that force was permitted only if British subjects were murdered in large numbers; Ivone Kirkpatrick, *The Inner Circle. Memoirs*, London, Macmillan, 1959, pp. 262-263.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Earl of Kilmuir, *Political Adventure. The Memoirs of the Earl of Kilmuir*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964, p. 268.

nationalization alone was not enough<sup>77</sup>. It is clear, however, that the pressure of the situation, the uncertainty about what to do, once the London Conference would be over, made the decisionmakers look for those acts that would justify military action.

The Menzies mission brought temporary relief. By the time Nasser was about to receive the delegation of the 18 countries that had convoked the London Conference, around 3 September, the dilemma was back on the table. This time Dulles came up with S.C.U.A., asking the British through diplomatic channels to accept this plan without yet turning to the United Nations. The British did not know whether this was another American attempt at delaying military action, or a genuine attempt to extract significant promises from Egypt. Kilmuir, in a letter to Eden, argued that the foundation of such a thing as S.C.U.A. would be very obscure in terms of what the 1888 Convention allowed the users to do. The Convention could be enforced 'only by economic and physical pressure, and, in the last resort, by force'; S.C.U.A. would make it more difficult to justify such a move in terms of the 1888 Convention<sup>78</sup>.

Eventually, on 11 September the Egypt Committee decided to go along with the Americans, but simultaneously agreed to have the Suez Canal Company recall its pilots from the Canal. Belligerent Ministers thus tried to provoke a situation that might justify force, as mentioned in Lloyd's paper of 20 August, unaware of the legal advisers' original warning of 28 July that Nasser's behaviour might not justify the pilots' withdrawal; the warning that had not reached the Committee due to the intervention of the Lord Chancellor in their draft.

Kilmuir, in a speech to the House of Lords on 12 September, the day that S.C.U.A. was officially announced, came very close to saying that the 1888 Convention allowed for military intervention. Five days later Fitzmaurice sent a letter to the Attorney-General, pointing out that in this speech Kilmuir had misinterpreted certain scholars of international law<sup>79</sup>. Fitzmaurice probably hoped to influence the decision making process by sending his interpretations the Lord Chancellor's Office<sup>80</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> CAB 134/1217, EC(56)26.

<sup>78</sup> Minute Kilmuir to Eden, 6 September 1956, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>79</sup> Marston, p. 788.

<sup>80</sup> When, as a member of Lloyd's delegation, at the United Nations at the negotiations between Egypt, Britain, and France during the first half of October, Fitzmaurice wrote to his Deputy at Whitehall, Vallat, about the long term consequences of the use of force for the United Kingdom. He added: 'I should be grateful if you would address a minute to the right quarter in the above terms (-). It should be seen by an Under-Secretary and also by Kirkpatrick. If there were any way of conveying (continued...)

3. Was U.N.-permission necessary? When British decisionmakers had to make up their mind about whether to go to the United Nations or to accept Dulles's ambiguous proposal for a Users' Association, some were afraid that reference to the United Nations implied that force could only be used after explicit permission would have been obtained from the Security Council. These doubts echoed Lloyd's paper of 20 August which stated that 'a considerable section of world opinion' held military action permissible as self-defence, collective self-defence, or under U.N. authority only<sup>81</sup>. At the Cabinet meeting of 11 September, that was to adopt the S.C.U.A.-proposal, Kilmuir argued that failure of S.C.U.A. due to obstruction on the part of Egypt did not imply that under international law Great Britain (and France) should have to turn to the United Nations and wait for permission: 'we should be fully justified in having recourse to force and submitting the issue simultaneously to the Security Council'<sup>82</sup>. Kilmuir's line of argument did not convince all members, notably Minister of Defence Walter Monckton, who insisted on S.C.U.A. as a prelude to further diplomatic moves at the United Nations, and Harold Macmillan, who considered S.C.U.A. as a prelude to the use of force. The adoption of S.C.U.A. thus served the purpose of maintaining unanimity in the Cabinet. Eden masterly postponed dissension by summing up that 'we should be justified in the last resort in using force to restore the situation', if peaceful means should all fail<sup>83</sup>.

Considerations of international law were no longer made at Cabinet or Committee level when negotiations were taking place at the United Nations (first half of October). Kilmuir had asked the Law Officers for a note on military action should the Security Council fail to take effective action. On 12 October they told Kilmuir that Egypt had not acted in any way as to justify force. Kilmuir did not agree with their analysis and wrote another in which he thought military action permissible because the doctrine of self-defence should be extended from nation-states to include international entities such as the Canal. The Law Officers could not accept Kilmuir's reformulation<sup>84</sup> and the Attorney-General prepared a memorandum to the

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<sup>80</sup>(...continued)

it through the Private Secretaries at No. 10, I should like this to be done. It might also not be a bad thing to send a copy to Dobson at the Lord Chancellor's Department, as it is more likely that it is in that Quarter that the PM obtains his advice'. Fitzmaurice to Vallat, FO 800/747, 9 October 1956.

<sup>81</sup> Marston, 'Legal advice on the Suez crisis', p. 782.

<sup>82</sup> CAB 128/30, CM 64(56), 11 September 1956.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Because the United Kingdom had recognized, as recently as 1954 when the new Canal Treaty had been concluded, that the Canal formed an integral part of Egypt's territory, and could thus not be compared to international territories, such as Tangier, Trieste, or the trust territories.



Prime Minister in order to convey his views on the matter. However, he did not send it off directly to 10 Downing Street, but had it commented upon by Kilmuir. The only paper that eventually reached the Prime Minister's Office was Kilmuir's final draft of his own paper on 21 October; it emphasized the justification of force in case of breakdown of law and order in the Canal leading to its blocking<sup>85</sup>.

Two curious elements emerge: first, the compliance of civil servants with administrative practice despite their strong doubts about Governmental policies. The Law Officers submitted all their memoranda to Kilmuir and sent him even the draft of their memorandum that was to warn the Prime Minister of important flaws in the Lord Chancellor's line of arguing. Second, Kilmuir clearly acted as, what Janis would call, a self-appointed mindguard. More than once did he prevent the opinion of legal experts from arriving at the decision making center. Similarly, in his own presentations of legal arguments he would state his own case, invoking the authority of one of the few Professors of International Law that supported his interpretations, Professor Arthur Goodhart of Oxford<sup>86</sup>. At the Cabinet of 28 August (an important one because Monckton raised the principle question of the use of force) Kilmuir used Goodhart's letter in order to make the point that force was justified in more instances than direct attack<sup>87</sup>. No balanced discussion of international legal arguments was held, and, it must be added, no-one asked for it.

An analysis of the role the legal argument in the decision making process in the period from the nationalization until the emergence of the Challe-plan around 16 October permits the following three conclusions:

(1) Most international legal arguments that reached the formal decision making units, the Cabinet and the Egypt Committee, came from David Kilmuir, the Lord Chancellor, apart from Selwyn Lloyd's paper of 18 August, which was based on the advice from Fitzmaurice.

(2) On the whole, neither the Cabinet nor the Egypt Committee, with the exception of Monckton, bothered much about the legal discussion as such. Both seemed more interested in exploiting the possibilities international law offered to them. This can be shown by the fact that Selwyn Lloyd's paper which raised doubts about the use of force in the light of Egypt's

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<sup>85</sup> The story of the correspondence between the Law Officers and the Lord Chancellor during the first three weeks of October can be distilled from Marston's discussion, 'Legal Advice on the Suez crisis', pp. 791-797.

<sup>86</sup> Goodhart had published a letter in *The Times* on 11 August which supported Kilmuir's interpretation. Goodhart called on Kilmuir on 10 or 11 September, and left him all sorts of material to use for his speech to the House of Lords the following day; Marston, *ibid.*, pp. 778-779.

<sup>87</sup> CAB 128/30, CM 62(56), 28 August 1956.

policies, was used as a summary of opportunities that Nasser might offer in future which would justify forceful retaliation: interference with British warships; actions that would endanger the lives of British subjects; refusal to a British ship of passage through the Canal; or interference with military installations at the Suez base. Of course, the move the British expected most results from, the recalling of the Canal Company's pilots is another example. It has been shown that, due to Kilmuir's monopoly over the legal argument, this decision was taken without the British politicians having seen Fitzmaurice's opinion on the illegality of such an act.

(3) Especially in August, international legal arguments were used to influence both public opinion and internal dissenters. In a letter to Eden, sent on 22 August, Lord President, Salisbury, tried to argue that Egypt's act of nationalization meant a breach of international law. Eden wrote 'I think it is excellent' and suggested that the memo should become a speech or an article<sup>88</sup>. Similarly, Eden and Lloyd asked the Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, who had arrived in London to attend the London Conference, to state his opinion on the international legal aspects of the issue on television as a counteroffensive against opinions that had been published in the British press during the first half of August. Menzies did so on 13 August<sup>89</sup>. Internal dissent was worrying Eden's inner circle when at the Egypt Committee meeting of 24 August Walter Monckton raised general doubts about the use of force (which he was to repeat in the Cabinet four days later), and found the Lord Privy Seal, Butler, among his supporters. In a letter to Eden, written after that meeting, Salisbury, referring to Monckton's and Butler's doubts, wrote:

'(-) the case for force will clearly need to be closely and cogently argued by those of us who agree with it (). Have you by any chance had a word with David Kilmuir ? I think he is v[ery] sound on the whole thing, and he might be of use with colleagues'<sup>90</sup>. This explains why Kilmuir at the Cabinet meeting of 28 August explicitly presented Professor Goodhart's argument on the use of force in international law.

The discussion of international law and the use of force acquires a completely different character after the presentation of General Challe's plan to intervene militarily if Israel were to attack Egypt. It was generally accepted in the Cabinet that such an intervention could be

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<sup>88</sup> Salisbury to Eden, 22 August 1956, PREM 11/1113.

<sup>89</sup> Menzies, *Afternoon Light*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>90</sup> Salisbury to Eden, 24 August 1956, PREM 11/1152.

justified under international law because presumably the British and French forces would be going in order to prevent an interruption of the free flow of traffic through the Canal because of an Israeli-Egyptian war. Kilmuir presented such an argument in a memorandum to the Cabinet on 29 October, entitled 'The Right of Intervention'<sup>91</sup>.

Once the Challe-plan had been presented to senior ministers on 15 and 16 October, legal justifications became to dominate the decision making process. Exactly because the Challe-plan had the advantage of the seemingness of justifiability under international law, British decisionmakers, in their contact with Israeli politicians through French intermediaries, hinted that they wanted to hold on to that legal figleaf, and therefore preferred not only to issue an ultimatum to both Egypt and Israel to stay away from the Suez Canal, with which Israel was not supposed to comply, of course, in order to make it possible to French and British forces to actually intervene, but indicated that they wanted to throw bombs on Israeli forces as well.

These details would not be known to the Cabinet, but in their deliberations about whether or not to adopt the idea of armed intervention in case of an Anglo-Israeli war, Cabinet members never put the issue of legal justification into doubt.

#### 17.4.3 Failure to spell out objectives: the decision to return to Egypt despite the 1954 Canal Treaty

British policy makers were caught in a dilemma regarding the consequences of an attack on Egypt. They had proclaimed the restoration of international control of Canal as their official aim. At the same time, they wanted the downfall of Nasser. Of course, this was never officially proclaimed because it would offend international public opinion. The Arab world and the United States would never agree to an occupation of a large proportion of Egyptian territory. However, military action which remained confined to the Canal area might not provoke Nasser's removal. This dilemma was felt more sharply, once the Challe-plan had been adopted, which drew its justification even stronger from arguments related to the free flow of traffic through an international waterway rather than to the removal of a dictator. The only way out of the dilemma was to believe in the immediate fall of Nasser once military operations would begin and to limit any occupation to the Canal area<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>91</sup> The memorandum is reproduced in full by Marston, 'Legal advice on the Suez crisis', pp. 800-801.

<sup>92</sup> This line of reasoning is displayed by Selwyn Lloyd in a memorandum to the Egypt Committee on 20 August: he suggests that military action will automatically lead to the overthrow of the Nasser regime, which would allow Anglo-French forces to withdraw from Egyptian territory and to keep a  
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As a consequence, British policymakers not prepared to face the various contingencies of such a move: first, they were very reluctant to consider the possibility that Anglo-French troops might have to stay longer in Egypt in order to protect a new, presumably anglophile government: indeed, the Chiefs of Staff warned that this might require the occupation of Cairo and possibly Alexandria<sup>92</sup>. Second, they preferred not to think of the possibility that Nasser might not be quickly removed, thus forcing Anglo-French troops to march to Cairo to that effect. Actually, British policy makers did not even consider whether any Egyptian politician or military was likely to overthrow Nasser and take his place<sup>94</sup>.

British policy-makers thus did not want to get involved in the occupation of a substantial portion of Egyptian territory. They were very anxious not to return to a situation which had cost so much effort to get out of only two years earlier: on November 4, Eden wrote to Eisenhower that 'we do not want occupation of Egypt, we could not afford it, and that is one of many reasons why we got out of Suez two years ago'<sup>95</sup>. Occupation had to be avoided in order not to offend the Arab world and international public opinion, not in the least American. This required the early collapse of Nasser's regime. The Cabinet agreed that this would only be possible if military operations were quick and successful<sup>96</sup>. No-one took account of the long period it would take to bring the troops to Egypt.

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<sup>92</sup>(...continued)

small force near the Canal. Lloyd added that Nasser was known to be very unpopular in Egypt; EC(26)28, PREM 11/1100. Evidence of British occupation plans can be found in the records of the meetings of the Defence (Transition) Committee, which designed plans for running the Canal, controlling occupied territory, and had already made an arrangement for Occupation Currency on 3 August; CAB 134/815.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum of the Chiefs of Staff, EC memo EC(56)63, 25 October 1956, PREM 11/1103. Only Walter Monckton had warned the Cabinet on 28 August that it would prove very difficult to get the troops out of Egypt once they would have landed, CM(56)62, 28 August 1956, PREM 11/1104.

<sup>94</sup> Apparently, Butler, Macmillan and Lloyd told Canadian Foreign Secretary Sir Lester Pearson in December 1956 that they had had no idea who could replace Nasser; Michael G. Fry, 'Canada, the North Atlantic, and the U.N.' in Louis and Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956*, p. 294; very little is known of any search for a substitute: the records show a letter of former King Farouk, which implicitly conveyed the message that he did not seek to reoccupy his throne; 19 September 1956, PREM 11/1118; Tournoux suggests that the British used their Egyptian contacts to sound out the deposed President Neguib, but he does not give any proof of this, J.R. Tournoux, *Secrets d'Etat. Dien Bien Phu, les Paras, l'Algérie, l'Affaire Ben Bella, Suez, la Cagoule, le 13 mai. De Gaulle au Pouvoir*, Plon, Paris, 1960 p. 163.

<sup>95</sup> Eden to Eisenhower, 4 November 1956, Telegram 520/56, PREM 11/1100.

<sup>96</sup> CM(56)73, 24 October 1956.

### **17.5 Independent variables and defective decision making**

The puzzle of Suez can only be resolved by making understandable the British misperception of the American attitude towards the conflict. Throughout the entire crisis British policymakers were confident that American support would be forthcoming. In the first stages of the crisis they thought that the Americans needed to be persuaded of how seriously Great Britain approached the situation. After the trilateral talks with Dulles, American hesitations about the use of force were explained away by various rationalizations, which were adapted to new circumstances once the Challe-plan was adopted.

This misperception was predominantly present at the level of the inner group: Eden, Macmillan, Lloyd and Salisbury formed the narrow circle that stayed in touch with the United States Government. Nevertheless, the expectation of American support was shared by their colleagues in both the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet. Although the various types of collective rationalization mainly appear within the inner circle, it can be safely concluded that misreading the Americans was a product of groupthink at all three levels of decision making.

Furthermore, important elements of defective decision making, closely related to this misperception, were the results of groupthink as well. First, the Company's pilots were recalled, even though at the level of the Egypt Committee knowledge had been available that such a move might be of no avail. Second, the Cabinet as well as the Egypt Committee preferred to continue believing that force was lawful, despite Lloyd's memorandum that had made it painfully clear that the British Government was left with very few possibilities that would justify military action under international law. Third, because they preferred not to offend the United States by occupying large parts of Egypt, no-one in the Egypt Committee or Cabinet, apart from Head, spoke up in order to warn against the irreconcilability of the twin objectives of protecting the Canal and toppling Nasser.

The operational code is useful to understand two important changes of attitude which occurs in the beginning of October: first, British politicians prefer to ignore Dulles and start relying completely on their conviction that Eisenhower in his public messages has shown to sympathize with the British position. Second, the argument of Presidential elections is now used to as a reason to proceed with the plan, rather than to wait until after the elections. Clearly then, the first two weeks of October hide the key to understanding the British decision to use force. Part of the explanation can be offered by the Operational Code: it had become clear that Dulles was unwilling to use the users' association as a means to put pressure on Nasser. In Eden's eyes, the American Secretary of State had thus entered the category of actors in world politics that did not play the game according to the rules that Eden thought

essential. These processes of misperception, and the consequent process of defective decision making can be understood as the product of the stress generated by the dilemmas of the so-called crucial dilemmas. As a matter of fact, the occurrence of symptoms of defective decision making seems correlated to the occurrence of many symptoms of groupthink: the issue of withdrawing the pilots is playing in the period of decisions 2 and 3, both characterized by a high number of groupthink symptoms at the level of both the inner group and the Egypt Committee. Similarly, the twisting of international law coincides with the presence of a large number of groupthink symptoms regarding decisions 2, 3, 5, and 6.

Of course, the conclusion that groupthink and operational code are related to defective decision making is an important one. The operational code, although apparently of limited explicatory value, is methodologically more interesting, because its reliance on master beliefs allows for predicting at forehand the probable terms within which an individual decision maker will define and handle a stressful situation. Groupthink, on the other hand, is related to the operational code in that it can, but need not, be related to high levels of stress. An analysis of groupthink does not include the testing of an hypothesis comparable to the master belief of the operational code. Yet, the present analysis of the Suez crisis suggests that several of the key participants of the inner group, notably Eden, Lloyd, Macmillan and Salisbury, responded to American hesitations in a manner that strikingly resembles what has been called the attitudinal prism of the foreign policy establishment.

The British misperception of the American attitude is rooted in both the expectations and the experiences that had been established by the so-called Anglo-American security regime in the 1945-1956 period. Basically, British policymakers remained convinced that the United States recognized the special interests of the United Kingdom in the Middle East; they had not been able to perceive a growing independent American policy towards the Middle East, and had actually considered American Middle Eastern policies as malleable to their own, such as in the case of the 1954 Suez Canal Treaty. This pattern is repeated in the Suez crisis. High hopes of American support were grounded in the British conviction that the United States would recognize that Nasser's policies constituted a threat to vital British interests in the area. When full American support did not come forward forthwith, British policy makers adopted one of their familiar tactics to cajole the Americans to align with them: during the first weeks of the crisis until the end of the London Conference, the British tried to exaggerate their case in order to make clear to the Americans that they meant serious business. They were convinced that the Americans needed a lead, as usual in Middle Eastern affairs. The same pattern is displayed during the discussions around the proposal of a users' association: British policy

makers agreed to go along with Dulles's vague idea, because they were confident that they could persuade the United States Government into using the payment of shipping dues to the new association as a lever on Nasser. As a matter of fact, they used their proven postwar method of persuasion by incessantly imprinting on the Eisenhower Administration that Nasser was an instrument in the hands of Communism. Eden's letters to the American President emphasized this aspect from the outset until the end of the crisis.

When these policies did not bring immediate results, British policymakers, confronted with various crucial decisions, each of which represented a weighty dilemma, engaged in various different types of rationalization in order to maintain their cognitive balance: in order to reassure themselves of the expectation grounded in their attitudinal prism, namely that American support was forthcoming, they had to explain away signs of American opposition to the use of force.

**PART V: CONCLUSIONS**







## Chapter 18: Conclusions

### 18.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter will deal with two sets of questions. First, it will be necessary to return to the research questions that have been formulated at the outset of this study. Next, it will be useful to try to assess whether the particular approach that has been adopted to study the Suez crisis has resulted in an interpretation of the decision making process in the United Kingdom that differs from traditional views.

### 18.2 Addressing the research questions

Two major research questions have been the subject of this study: (1) to what extent does neorealism explain Anglo-American relations between 1945 and 1956 in a satisfactory way? (2) Do tools from cognitive psychology that put emphasis on the influence of individual foreign policy makers complement a neorealist analysis of that period? Both questions assume that this particular case study is a relevant subject in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the neorealist approach to the study of international relations. It was argued that neorealist authors consider the Suez crisis a piece of evidence of their theory of balance-of-power, which predicted different outcomes as a consequence of a change in the configuration of the international political system: France and the United Kingdom were no longer able to act as great powers because the distribution of power within the international system had changed to the benefit of the United States and, to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union.

This seemingly obvious case raises some serious question, however, that cannot be answered by a neorealist analysis. It leaves large portions of postwar French and British foreign policies unexplained: it is unable to account for the limited wars in which both countries were engaged before the Suez crisis, and also, at least Great Britain, until ten years after that humiliating episode. Moreover, it cannot explain why British policymakers, who had acknowledged American world leadership, and who had decided that Egypt was no longer of strategic value to the United Kingdom, decided to intervene with force, despite American opposition against it.

Neorealism's inability to account for these phenomena finds its origins in its exclusive emphasis on the nation-state, the international system, and the distribution of capabilities as the variables that are needed to explain international politics: this attention to rather static elements allows it to draw a general picture of world affairs, but the neglect of processes that

play at the level of individual foreign policy makers is its consequence. On the one hand, this reveals its strength: neorealism is able to give a parsimonious theory of state behaviour in different configurations of the international system; on the other hand, paradoxically, it entails its weakness: not willing to take elite perceptions into account, it assumes that the actual operation of the system's constraints and opportunities is automatic. Yet, it has been borne out by this study that an understanding of the actual operation of those systemic influences requires the incorporation of the perceptions and expectations of foreign policymakers, that is, of variables, that lie beyond the system and the nation-state.

In order to be able to answer research question two, individual cognitive beliefs have been put forward as an instrument to assess the effects of the perceptions and expectations of foreign policy makers. For this purpose, the operational code construct was selected as an appropriate technique. It was made clear, however, that individual cognitive belief systems operate within the context of the general orientation of policymakers towards world affairs, their so-called attitudinal prism. Furthermore, taking into consideration that in Western countries major foreign policy decisions are often taken by more than one individual, it was deemed necessary to take small group dynamics into account. It was found that the behaviour of small groups can be intimately linked to a leader's cognitive belief system, if the way he handles the small group qualifies as directive leadership.

An analysis of British decision making during the Suez crisis demonstrated that the operational code of Anthony Eden contributes significantly to the understanding of two out of six so-called decisional conflicts: his attitude to both the decision to prefer diplomacy over force, and the decision to accept the Challe-plan has been affected by Eden's cognitive belief system; groupthink appears to have played a role in most decisional conflicts, notably regarding the decisions to send the Menzies mission to Cairo, the decision to accept S.C.U.A. but to withdraw the Company's pilots at the same time, as well as the decisions to accept the Challe-plan and to continue its implementation, despite growing opposition. Interestingly, it was found that, as the crisis developed, decision making was increasingly concentrated in the hands of an inner circle around Eden, which fell prey to groupthink.

Despite the influence of individual and group variables, the decision making process has been constrained, at several instances, by the organizational and domestic context in which British policymakers had to operate. Especially the limitations of various military options, and the regular changes of the military's assessment of them, affected the decision making process. This was notably the case at the beginning and towards the end of the crisis.

It has been shown, however, that the puzzle of Suez can only be resolved by making reference to individual and group variables. British policymakers refused to appreciate American opposition to the use of force, and ignored the risks they would be exposed to by going to an area that they had decided to leave for good reasons only two years earlier. The British Cabinet remained blind to these dangers, because of the operation of groupthink at the level of the Cabinet, the Egypt Committee, and especially the inner circle around Eden. Eden's leadership style, and the impact of his cognitive belief system, contributed to that process at two instances: when British ministers determined the nature of the problem and when they adopted the Challe-plan. Eden's operational code has shown its value especially in explaining why the British decided to go it alone and to ignore further suggestions from the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles.

The origins of the British attitude, however, lie in the perception of the nature of Anglo-American relations, that had been constructed in their experiences with the so-called Anglo-American security regime between 1945 and 1956. They had come to believe that the United States acknowledged British primacy in the Middle East. Moreover, they were confident that the United States could be cajoled into supporting the United Kingdom in its defence of its Middle Eastern interests, by making use of the prospect of Communist penetration of the area. In this sense, the attitudinal prism of foreign policy makers can be a valuable tool in assessing the actual operation of systemic constraints on the behaviour of its units.

Looking back on the tools that have been employed in the empirical part of this study, it must be admitted that the usefulness of the operational code is a bit disappointing, especially when one takes into consideration the amount of work that has to be put in its constructing. Moreover, the rather influential role of the attitudinal prism is a matter of concern: its previously designed categories of beliefs constituted the methodological advantage of the operational code over other techniques. The attitudinal prism of the Brecher-model does not work with detailed, preconceived notions about beliefs. It will thus be much more difficult to engage in a comparative analysis of the influence of cognitive beliefs, if one will have to rely on the attitudinal prism rather than the operational code.

Regarding groupthink, it should be emphasized that the present analysis of the Suez crisis suggests the existence of a link between the presence of symptoms of groupthink and the occurrence of elements of defective decision making: the puzzle of Suez cannot be resolved without reference to the notion of groupthink. However, at various moments, the occurrence of premature concurrence-seeking seems intimately linked to the directive leadership style of

Anthony Eden. Finally, a tentative conclusion might be that groupthink sometimes activates several central beliefs that are present at the level of the foreign policy elite: the importance of beliefs that are present in the attitudinal prism of British policymakers points into that direction.

In conclusion, the perceptions and expectations of foreign policymakers have to be included in an analysis of the actual operation of systemic constraints and opportunities on the units of the system. Cognitive beliefs of foreign policy makers provide a possibility to bridge the gap between the system and its units. Tools from cognitive psychology, such as the operational code, the attitudinal prism, and groupthink offer practical solutions to the question of how to analyze systemic influences. The present study points to the need for neorealist theories to develop their notions of socialization rather than to rely on competition as the mechanism which explains the impact of systemic variables on international politics.

### 18.3 The Suez crisis

A complete historical reconstruction of the Suez crisis has not been the purpose of this study. It seems clear, however, that an analysis from the point of view of political science and cognitive psychology puts the crisis in a different perspective than most historical studies offer. Four points are worth mentioning.

First, the reconstruction of the decision making process that was presented in this study suggests that British decisions were the product of a small inner group rather than one individual. The strong evidence of the occurrence of groupthink, coupled with the relative weak influence of Eden's operational code, points to a small number of ministers who shared certain objectives and views, and who carried decisions in both the Egypt Committee and the full Cabinet. By consequence, it is unfair to attribute the policy fiasco that Suez certainly was, to Anthony Eden alone.

Second, the composition of the inner group puts a larger burden on certain individuals that became known as opponents of the use of force. This is especially true for R.A. Butler, who has been present at many crucial meetings of the inner group and who helped in preparing the Cabinet for accepting the Challe-plan.

Third, the analysis of six decisional conflicts with the use of the operational code and groupthink has made it abundantly clear that the period during which the plan for a users' association was seriously discussed, has been the fatal phase of the Suez crisis. For the British the users' association was the instrument of extracting a commitment from the United States

that they would support Great Britain in putting serious pressure on Egypt. At the same time, when the United States showed reluctance to such a commitment, British policymakers could have realized that their conception of the nature of Anglo-American relations was a false one, and that the Americans could no longer be persuaded to defend British interests in the Middle East by talking about the threat of Communism. British policymakers preferred to ignore all alarming signs: instead, they decided to go it alone and to leave the Americans in the dark as to their real intentions. Meanwhile, with the use of several techniques of collective rationalization, they continued believing that American support would be forthcoming all the same.

Finally, if the analysis that was presented in this study is correct, it must be concluded that one popular historical explanation of British decision making may not be that powerful after all. Most historical studies stress the importance of the historical parallel that British policymakers drew between the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland in 1936. It is often contended that the analysis of the situation by, especially, Eden, Salisbury, and Macmillan was founded on that historical analogy: Nasser was a dictator from the category to which also Mussolini and Hitler belonged; the seizure of the Canal Company was a minor threat, just like the remilitarization of the Rhineland had constituted a minor threat. However, if Nasser was not checked immediately, he would develop into an aggressive dictator. In short, British policymakers supposedly did not want to commit the same error that had been made in the 1930s.

The records, however, show very little evidence of the presence of this historical analogy in the minds of British ministers. Of course, this could be taken to mean that consensus existed among British policymakers about the strength of the parallel, so that it would not appear in the minutes. Actually, the historical analogy surfaces in the records in two types of circumstances: (1) when a split appears in the Cabinet or in Parliament, such as towards the end of August and in the beginning of September; (2) when the United States Government has to be convinced that it should support the British position. This is especially the case in Eden's letters to President Eisenhower.

According to me, this suggests that the parallel with the 1930s was first of all a technique of persuasion. It was used to restore unanimity when Monckton and, to a certain extent, Butler revolted in the Egypt Committee and the Cabinet on 24 and 28 August respectively. It was again employed in September when the Conservative Party in the Commons was about to split on the issue of force.

In his letters to Eisenhower, Eden regularly compares Nasser to Mussolini and warns the American President that he was effectively in the hands of the Soviets, just as Mussolini was in the hands of Hitler. The employment of the analogy fits the attitudinal prism: it was regular practice for British policymakers to try to obtain American support by making use of the existence of a communist threat in the Middle East.

Furthermore, it is significant that Eden insistently compares Nasser with Mussolini rather than Hitler. This can be explained by Eden's cognitive belief system: it should be remembered that as Foreign Secretary in the 1930s, Eden had always been worried more by Mussolini than by Hitler. Until well into 1939, his view was that it was possible to reach some kind of agreement with Hitler, while he had considered Mussolini a 'gangster' who was completely untrustworthy. In terms of Eden's operational code, Mussolini did not respect certain codes of international behaviour that Eden considered the essence of foreign affairs. Eden started comparing Nasser with Mussolini in January 1956<sup>1</sup>. This may indicate that at that moment Eden started to distrust Nasser as someone who might not uphold certain standards of international conduct. Nationalizing the Suez Canal Company must have been the final proof of his lack of trustworthiness. Eden's employment of the analogy with the 1930s should thus be interpreted in terms of his master belief rather than as the application of an analogy with the 1930s.

#### 18.4 Final remarks

The study of the constraining influence of the international system on its units should take the perceptions and expectations of political elites into account. Individual cognitive beliefs and small group dynamics constitute an important instrument for such an analysis. This study has argued that the employment of these variables are indispensable to a study of the adaptation of the United Kingdom to the reality of the new bipolar world. A number of complementary case studies could provide some more insight into this process of socialization: for instance, it would be interesting to analyze the 1951 Abadan crisis into some more detail. Its similarity to the Suez crisis is striking, yet its outcome was the complete opposite: the Labour Government yielded to strong American pressure and decided not to use force, although troops had already been flown into the area. It would be interesting to assess the role of the cognitive beliefs of members of the Labour Government at the time. An analysis of small group dynamics during the Abadan crisis might produce an interesting comparison with

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<sup>1</sup> Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, entry 29 January 1956, p. 327.



the Suez crisis: in both crises a small Cabinet committee was installed to deal with a similar situation.

Further case studies should also serve the purpose of assessing the relative value of the various approaches to the study of cognitive beliefs. This study suggests that the method, which would be suitable for comparative research, the operational code, might be of limited value. The attitudinal prism, however, although based on much vaguer categories, proved to be very useful to an analysis of Anglo-American relations. It is, therefore, of great importance to refine the notion of the attitudinal prism, in order to stimulate systematic comparative research on the influence of cognitive beliefs.



## **APPENDICES**



## Appendix 1: The possible contribution of rational choice theory

Just as cognitive psychology, rational choice theory also emphasizes the role of individuals. It argues that politics can be explained by choices of individual actors, who pursue their self-interest. Collective decisions can thus be explained in terms of individual preferences<sup>1</sup>. Rational choice theory touches this study in two ways. First, in its strictest form, it could be claimed that international decisions should be explained by the preferences of individuals. A more modest approach would be to identify actors of world politics, such as nation-states, with individual actors. This is done by, e.g., Keohane in his study of international regimes<sup>2</sup>, and by Bueno de Mesquita in his study of war initiation<sup>3</sup>.

Second, it would be possible to explain the behaviour of the foreign policy elite, and thus of nation-states, in terms of rational choice theory. It has been objected, however, that rational choice theory is based on assumptions that do not contribute to a sufficient understanding of reality. Actors are supposed to have extensive and clear knowledge of their environment, clear and stable preferences, as well as skills that allow them to compute the choice of the best alternative. In reality, however, individuals are constrained by the limits of their cognitive abilities which set boundaries on the rationality of their behaviour<sup>4</sup>.

To a certain extent, an individual's operational code could be considered a picture of his bounded rationality. However, even knowledge of his bounded rationality leaves unexplained why individuals develop certain norms which constrain their behaviour: Anthony Eden's operational code shows how important he judged gentleman-like behaviour for the conduct of foreign affairs. An analysis of the Suez crisis bears out that Eden did not rationally pursue his self-interest, obtaining support from the United States in order to avoid diplomatic defeat; he ignored Dulles's clear warnings, partly because Dulles did not live up to Eden's norm of gentleman-like behaviour.

But even if rational choice theory were able to take account of norms, it would remain unable to account for small group processes: the surprising element of British decision making during the Suez crisis constituted in the neglect of available information: throughout the crisis it had been known that the United States would not support an Anglo-French intervention, yet British decision makers preferred to ignore it. Thus, even the existence of extensive knowledge of the environment, an important assumption of rational choice theory, does not guarantee that individuals will act upon that information. Groupthink explains why British decision makers preferred to ignore the information available.

The impact of individual variables thus cannot be reduced to the rational pursuit of preferences. Moreover, as this study has underlined, foreign policy decisions are also affected by the institutional setting of domestic politics and bureaucratic organizations. It would thus be wrong to aim at an explanation exclusively in terms of individual preferences.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Kristen Renwick-Monroe, 'The Theory of Rational Action: Its Origins and Usefulness for Political Science', in Kristen Renwick-Monroe (ed.), The Economic Approach to Politics. A Critical Reassessment of the Theory of Rational Action, Harper Collins, New York, 1991, pp. 1-5.

<sup>2</sup> Keohane, After Hegemony, pp. 65-84.

<sup>3</sup> Bueno de Mesquita, The War Trap.

<sup>4</sup> Renwick Monroe, 'The Theory of Rational Action', pp. 4-5; Adrienne Windhoff-Héritier, 'Institutions, Interests and Political Choice', in Adrienne Windhoff-Héritier and Roland Czada (eds.), Political Choice. Institutions, Rules, and the Limits of Rationality, Campus/Westview, Frankfurt/Boulder, 1991, pp. 29-31.

## Appendix 2: When was the start of the Suez crisis?

It is come to date the start of the Suez crisis to 26 July 1956, the day on which Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company. This study is no exception. However, it could be argued that relations between Egypt and the United Kingdom had started to deteriorate long before that date. As a matter of fact, it has been suggested that Nasser's move was an act Eden had long been waiting for. Nutting has become noted for his account of Eden's reaction after Jordan's King Hussein's dismissal of General Glubb, presumably at Egyptian instigation: 'I want Nasser destroyed, not removed, destroyed'<sup>1</sup>. This has been taken to mean that Eden wanted to remove Nasser from power as soon as possible. If this interpretation is correct, it would imply that Anglo-Egyptian relations had reached crisis proportions long before July 1956.

The records show that the Glubb-affair has indeed been important in setting the stage for what was to come. Nevertheless, I think that this material has been misinterpreted to a certain extent. I contend that the abandonment of appeasing Nasser, as it is called in the records, had less to do with Eden's personal dislike of the Egyptian leader, than with traditional British attempts to get American support for their traditional Middle East policy which focused on strengthening the role of Iraq and the Baghdad Pact.

To illustrate this point, it is important to return to the Czech arms deal of September 1955, when Egypt bought arms in the Eastern bloc, much to the annoyance of the United States and Great Britain. At the Cabinet meeting of 4 October 1955, Eden had said that he 'saw no advantage to bring pressure upon the Nasser regime, e.g. [] obstructing Egyptian policies in regard to the High Dam'. They decided not to put too much pressure on Nasser, as it was 'doubtful whether such pressure could be made effective and a rebuff would be bad for our prestige in the Middle East'. Instead, the Cabinet preferred to isolate Egypt from the other Arab states<sup>2</sup>. A fortnight later, Eden even went as far as to say that Nasser's 'decision to accept the Soviet offer was understandable, if regrettable', considering that he depended on his army's support, and the West did not supply him with any arms<sup>3</sup>.

What actually happened, was an increased British effort to convince the United States Government of the danger of Soviet penetration in the Middle East, which was facilitated by the Czech arms deal. Indeed, Eden and Macmillan accelerated their pressure on the Eisenhower Administration to sponsor the Aswan Dam project with a loan together with Britain and the World Bank<sup>4</sup>. In December 1955 Great Britain and the United States presented their offer to Egypt. The plan did not include a long-term guarantee of assistance, because the Western countries wanted to review the amount of aid each year, in an attempt to use the Aswan loan as a means to tie Egypt to the West<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nutting, No End of a Lesson, p. 34; Horne suggests that portions of the original draft of the book have been excised; Horne, Macmillan, 1894-1956, pp. 397, 493, note 8; Kyle quotes a personal letter of Nutting's in which Nutting testifies that Eden had actually said: 'I want him murdered'; Kyle, Suez, pp. 99, 581, note 53.

<sup>2</sup> CAB 128(34)8, 4 October 1955, p. 10, Public Record Office, Kew.

<sup>3</sup> CAB 128(35)7, 20 October 1955.

<sup>4</sup> Aronson, From Sideshow to Centerstage, pp. 156-157; Aronson relies on the interviews with Aldrich, Hoover and Humphrey, stored at John Foster Dulles Oral History Collection.

<sup>5</sup> Aronson, ibid., p. 161.

British efforts in late 1955 should therefore be interpreted as part of their traditional game -to use the Communist danger to persuade the United States to pursue a policy that would run parallel to British interests. In this context the Anglo-American talks of January/February 1956 become much more relevant: their objective was to coordinate both countries' policies towards the Middle East. British officials, notably Evelyn Shuckburgh, by then Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office responsible for the Middle East, emphasized Nasser's support of the left in Syria, and his responsibility for the failure of the Templer mission in December that had aimed at persuading Jordan to join the Baghdad Pact. During these talks Dulles said that Nasser's attitude towards the Aswan Dam proposal would give an important clue to Egypt's foreign policy in general, but added that a solution to the Israeli-Egyptian dispute was a prerequisite for full American support of the Baghdad pact<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, by 1 March 1956, when General Glubb was dismissed by King Hussein, the British had succeeded in making the Americans cautious about Egypt's relations with the Soviet Union, and therefore more appreciative of British efforts to strengthen the Baghdad Pact.

During the preceding two months, General Glubb, as Commander of the Arab Legion, had sent several reports of Egyptian subversive activities in Jordan, including a campaign to persuade young King Hussein to dismiss him. On 28 February Duke, the British Ambassador to Jordan, reported of rumours that the King was about to sack Glubb, which he actually did two days later, although the decision was not made public. For two days, telegrams were frantically exchanged between London and Amman in which Eden, who was conducting Foreign Affairs while Lloyd was touring the Middle East, hoped to undo the decision. Indeed the Jordanian Prime Minister had suggested that Glubb's dismissal might be temporary in order to enhance the King's domestic prestige. On 2 March, however, Glubb's dismissal was announced by a Jordanian radio broadcast, actually before Eden's telegram had reached Hussein. Nevertheless, in his messages to King Hussein (through Ambassador Duke), Eden remained rather constructive: first, he asked for the remaining British officers to remain in their posts, and when they were dismissed, he wanted them to be employed 'in comparable positions in the Legion'<sup>7</sup>.

A remarkable difference appears between the relative moderate responses in the official telegrams and the anger and emotion which Glubb's dismissal provoked within Whitehall. It was perceived as a severe blow to British prestige in the Middle East, and was thought to have severe repercussions. The event provoked a full revision of Middle East policy by Senior Ministers on 5 March 1956<sup>8</sup>. It was decided that some examples of strong action in the region should be set: it was thus agreed to deport Cypriot Archbishop Makarios; furthermore, an

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<sup>6</sup> Aronson, *ibid.*, pp. 164-166.

<sup>7</sup> This account is based on FO 371/121540: VJ 1201/1 (2 Jan 1956); VJ 1201/2 (22 Feb 1956); VJ 1201/3 (28 Feb 1956); VJ 1201/4 (28 Feb 1956); VJ 1201/9 Telegrams 274, 276 (1 Mar 1956); VJ 1201/6 (1 Mar 1956); VJ 1201/11, Telegrams 346, 347 (2 Mar 1956); VJ 1201/13 Telegram 13 (1 Mar 1956), VJ 1201/14 Telegram 139; VJ 1201/18G/20/22, Telegram 289 (2 Mar 1956); VJ 1201/21, Telegrams 358, 138/56 (3 Mar 1956), all at Public Record Office, Kew; telegram from Mallory (US Embassy London to State Department), Department of State Central Files, 741.551/3-256, in Foreign Relations of the United States 1955-1957, Volume 13, Near East, Jordan, Yemen, edited by John P. Glennon, US Government Printing Office, Washington, 1988, pp. 26-28.

<sup>8</sup> Present were Eden, Salisbury, Macmillan, Butler, Lennox-Boyd, Heath, Brook, Temple, Boyle, Kirkpatrick, Nutting, and Shuckburgh; Shuckburgh, Descent to Suez, p. 343, entry 5 March 1956.

intervention in Bahrain was considered, because stones had been thrown at Lloyd only two days before<sup>9</sup>.

Much more importantly, however, senior ministers judged that once more an effort should be made to win over the Americans to the Baghdad Pact. Nutting's account of the Ministers' meeting, in his telegram to Lloyd, who was on his way to a conference in Karachi, is revealing in many ways: 'Americans now seem ready to take additional responsibilities in ME and are looking to us for advice [] Implicit in above policy is abandonment of appeasement of Nasser. This may be unwelcome to Americans but fact remains that appeasement has not paid and I suggest you should leave Dulles in no doubt about our suspicions of growing contacts between Egypt and Soviet Russia. Latest information on Aswan Dam negotiations suggests that Egyptians may well be playing double game'<sup>10</sup>. Three considerations are relevant in this respect.

First, the dismissal of Glubb was not judged by the British Cabinet as the result of an act by Nasser. It is therefore not true that somehow in early March Eden started a personal war with the Egyptian leader; although, reportedly, Eden compared him with Mussolini<sup>11</sup>. In short, the Cabinet's response was not a response to Nasser<sup>12</sup>, but rather a reaction to the perception that the dismissal of Glubb had affected British prestige in the Middle East.

Second, the Cabinet's reaction was, rather predictably, to strengthen the Baghdad Pact and to try to cajole the Americans into more active support to that effect. Nutting's telegram reveals how much propaganda value British Government officials attached to potential contacts between the Soviet Union and Egypt as a means of influencing American opinion.

Third, it shows that in March 1956 the British still believed that the Americans would look to Great Britain for advice on Middle Eastern affairs. Although the American Government, by that time, had reached the conclusion that Nasser's nationalism was less and less serving American political interests in the Middle East<sup>13</sup>, the Americans were not prepared to commit themselves to support the Baghdad Pact openly, as Dulles told Lloyd in Karachi on 8 March 1956<sup>14</sup>. Testimony of the seriousness of this British attempt to exploit the Glubb-affair comes from the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom, who reported that the British seemed willing to reach an agreement about the problem of the border-line of the Buraimi oasis, when he told Kirkpatrick that the matter was equally important as the strengthening the Baghdad Pact [the United States thought a settlement of the Buraimi dispute would draw Saudi Arabia away from Egyptian influence]<sup>15</sup>. For the sake of Anglo-American cooperation against Egypt the British Government seemed willing to give in on an issue to

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<sup>9</sup> In his diary Shuckburgh suggests that the Cabinet was simply eager to take any strong action, 'to show that we are still alive and kicking, and they thought Bahrain a good place because of the recent stoning of Selwyn Lloyd'. *Descent to Suez*, p. 344.

<sup>10</sup> FO 800/734, Telegram 531, Nutting to Lloyd, 5 March 1956, *Public Record Office*, Kew.

<sup>11</sup> On 3 March 1956, according to Shuckburgh's diary, *Descent to Suez*, p. 341, entry 3 March.

<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the Foreign Office would not be able to find evidence that either the Saudis or the Egyptians were involved in Glubb's dismissal, as reported by Winthrop Aldrich to State Department on 9 March 1956, *FRUS, 1955-1957*, p. 28, footnote 6.

<sup>13</sup> Aronson, *From Sideshow to Centerstage*, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup> Lloyd, *Suez 1956. A Personal Account*, p. 54

<sup>15</sup> Aldrich to State, 5 March 1956, reporting on a conversation with Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, Department State Central Files, 741.551/3-556, *FRUS 1955-1957*, Volume 13, pp. 28-29.



which they had attached great importance until then: the United Kingdom had occupied the Buraimi oasis only a few months before in order to protect the area from Saudi claims.

The most precious prize was therefore further intensive Anglo-American coordination of Middle East policy, based on the consensus that at some stage a tougher line towards Nasser would be the likely outcome. Its first victim would be the Aswan loan: when on 9 March the American Anderson mission failed, which aimed to drawing Egypt and Israel closer by arranging a face to face meeting between Ben Gurion and Nasser<sup>16</sup>, pressure to discontinue the offer quickly mounted, and Eisenhower and Dulles concluded that Nasser was not the man on which they could build American Middle Eastern policy. Significantly, by that time British and American Chiefs of Staffs had started consultations about coordinating military emergencies in the area.

It is therefore rather difficult to give a correct assessment of the importance of the Glubb affair. On the one hand, it is true that a policy reorientation followed, part of which implied the abandonment of wooing Egypt. But, more than developing some kind of strategy against Nasser, the reorientation was aimed at making the United States more appreciative of British interests in the area, and therefore less inclined to consider Egypt as the pivot of Middle Eastern stability, and more positive towards the role of British client states, notably Iraq. Evidence exists that early in April the British Government was still willing to come to an agreement with Egypt about anti-British propaganda: 'I [Lloyd] was still in two minds about how we should deal with Nasser [] I said I did not despair of even actually doing business with Nasser, but I thought that success had gone to his head'<sup>17</sup>. Although the parallel between Nasser and Mussolini was used during the Glubb affair, it is unclear to which extent this remained in the minds of the policy makers<sup>18</sup>.

It seems therefore save to date the start of the Suez crisis to the moment at which the news of Egypt's act of nationalization reached British decision makers, that is in the evening of 26 July 1956. The Glubb affair has certainly added to an increase in threat perceptions, but

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<sup>16</sup> Aronson, *From Sideshow to Centerstage*, p. 165; the Anderson mission was part of the larger 'Alpha' project, which was a secret initiative of the United Kingdom and the United States to bring about a comprehensive settlement for the Arab-Israeli dispute; cf. Shimon Shamir, 'The Collapse of Project Alpha', in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds.), *Suez 1956. The Crisis and its Consequences*, Oxford University Press, Oxford etc., 1989 (1991), pp. 73-100.

<sup>17</sup> FO 800/735, Conversation between Chauvel (French Ambassador) and Selwyn Lloyd, V 1072/39, 6 April 1956. Only two days before had Lloyd instructed the British Ambassador in Cairo to ask Nasser 'for some concrete indication [] that more friendly relations are indeed their wish', FO 800/735, Telegram 988, Lloyd to Trevelyan, 3 April 1956.

<sup>18</sup> At 11 March 1956 French Prime Minister Mollet visited Chequers. In his talks with Eden he draws a parallel with the 1930s. Eden's reaction, however, is very difficult to interpret: 'He [Mollet] could compare the situation with the situation in 1938 or 1939. The allies had never understood Hitler until it was too late. In Hitler they had had to face pan Germanism. After that had come the threat of pan Slavism which was still with us. What we now saw in North Africa was the alliance between pan Slavism and pan Islam. All this was in the works of Nasser, just as Hitler's policy had been written down in Mein Kampf []'. Eden replied that 'it was very difficult to know how to deal with Nasser. He [Eden] was quite sure that we had been right to make an agreement on the Canal Zone base. The importance of Nasser lay in the influence of Egypt in the Arab world [] We had to find a way of dealing with Nasser without putting the Arab world against us []'. He added that sending arms to Israel certainly would not help; FO 800/734, WF 1051/9, 11 March 1956, record of a conversation between Mollet and Eden. For one thing, this seems a rather moderate reaction of Eden's, not one heartily agreeing with Mollet's analysis, but rather specifying the different circumstances in the Middle East from Europe. I take that as an indicator that the parallel was not (yet) that powerful in guiding British policy.

Great Britain's rather mild policies in the Spring of 1956 suggest that the situation had not yet reached crisis proportions: there is no evidence of the perception of either time constraints or the likelihood of hostilities.

**Appendix 3**

**The attendance of 40 Egypt Committee meetings between 26 July 1956 and 6 November 1956**

	July										August									
	27	28	30 A	30 B	31 A	31 B	31 C	1	2	3	7	9A	9B	10	14	16	17	20	22	23
Eden	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Salisbury		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Macmillan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x
Monckton	x	x								x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lloyd	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Brook	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Watkinson	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	
Bishop	x																			
Laskey	x																			
Home		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Templer		x	x						x	x	x			x						
Dermot-B		x	x						x	x	x									
Davis		x																		
Snelling		x																		
Butler			x	x	x			x	x	x	x								x	x
Head			x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	
Heath			x		x										x					x
Mountbat- ten			x						x	x	x			x		x			x	
Thor- neycroft				x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x

[illegible]

	August			September								October				November				
	24	27	28	4	7	10	12	14	17	19	25	1	8	10	17	1A	1B	3	4A	4B
Eden	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Salisbury	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x						
Macmillan	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		x	x	x	x
Monckton	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x			
Lloyd	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x		x	x	x	x
Brook	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x			x	x	x
Watkinson	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x		
Bishop																				
Laskey																				
Home	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x		x	x	x	x
Templer				x											x		x	x		
Dermot-B																	x	x		
Davis																				
Snelling																				
Butler	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x	x
Head	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Heath	x			x																
Mountbat- ten				x														x		
Thor- neycroft		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x	x

[illegible]

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The files at the Public Record Office (PRO) at Kew which have been used in this study are labelled AIR (Air Ministry), ADM (Admiralty), CAB (Cabinet Office), DEFE (Ministry of Defence), DO (Commonwealth Office), FO (Foreign Office), FO 800 (Personal Files of the Foreign Secretary), LCO (Lord Chancellor's Office), PREM (Prime Minister's Office), T (Treasury), WO (War Office). For the recomposition of the decision making process, extensive use has been made of the files under FO 800/713-717, which hold Selwyn Lloyd's personal diary of engagements between July and November 1956.

Many documents that are referred to in this study can be found in the official publications of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States, the British Documents on Foreign Policy and the Foreign Relations of the United States series. The correct references appear in the footnotes.

Both the Monckton Papers and William Clark's diary of his period as Eden's press counsellor are in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The archives of the French Socialist Party SFIO (Section Francaise de l'Internationale Ouvrière) can be found at the Organisation Universitaire de Recherche Socialiste in Paris.

Alistair Horne's biography of Harold Macmillan, properly presented here as a secondary source, offers many excerpts from Macmillan's personal diary and should thus partly count as a primary source.

Primary sources should, of course, be handled with care. This is particularly true for documents that seem genuine accounts of men and events, such as the diaries of William Clark and Evelyn Shuckburgh. Both worked closely with Anthony Eden and used their diaries to gain some relief from the pressures at work. As to Shuckburgh's account, it should be kept in mind that his judgment of Eden and his policies changed substantially after his appointment as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office dealing with Middle Eastern Affairs in May 1954. Part of this changed attitude can certainly be attributed to identification with a new role: as Under-Secretary Shuckburgh was responsible for the secret 'Alpha'-Project which aimed at a settlement between Israel and her neighbours. Part of Shuckburgh's statements thus reflect his interests as Under-Secretary which differed from those he had as Eden's Principal Private Secretary.

Most books on Suez use Clark's memoirs From Three Worlds (London, 1986). It seems more correct to use the original diary (although it may have been edited later as well), while keeping in mind that towards the end of crisis his account is becoming blurred by his outrage over the Challe-plan. Clark's account, however, is an important source for the reconstruction of the decision making process, and for inside information on important meetings because of Clark's regular lunches with Monckton and Brook.

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